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The WASHINGTON
RANDOLPHS &
THEIR FRIENDS

T. M.

1. Fiction, Scottish

2. Virginia - Social life, 19th cent. - Fiction

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THE
WASHINGTON RANDOLPHS
AND THEIR FRIENDS

*Extracts from the Diary of
A Lady of Old Virginia*

Anna Mary Macleod

SELECTED AND EDITED

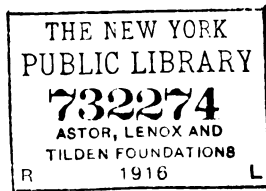
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NEW YORK

TO

M. E. R.

At the present time, when the detective story and the "problem" novel seem to suit best the popular taste, these simple memories of a simpler life than ours may appear hopelessly old-fashioned. I dedicate them to you, however, in the faith that you will read them with interest, not only for the sake of the affection that prompts me to associate you with them, but for the dearer sake of the days when they were not written but lived—"the days that are no more."

If they in any degree reflect the tender grace of those days, it will rejoice the heart of

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THE WASHINGTON RANDOLPHS AND THEIR FRIENDS

CHAPTER I

In the Golden Age of the South—that, like other Golden Ages, is growing mistier daily—there lived in one of the most romantic portions of what is now West Virginia a few families whose names showed that they had come from further east. Several generations before the earliest time of which I have any memory, branches of the Washingtons, Prestons, and Randolphs—let us call them so—had broken off from the main stem, and planted themselves in the very lands which the Father of his Country, while yet unknown to fame, had surveyed. Virginia is an exception to the rule that a prophet is without honor in his own country. A Virginian with an historic name is honored the world over, but nowhere so thoroughly as in his native State. The lesser families of the migration became the aristocracy of the region in which they had cast their lot, the Washingtons its Princes of the Blood. And the consort of the reigning prince was always known as Madam Washington.

The colony did not grow much—was possibly not expected to grow. The eldest son took the paternal acres; the others, by way of the University of Virginia, or West Point, or Annapolis, went out into the world,

making a pleasant link between it and those they had left behind. When in the course of human events the royal family dwindled down to one girl, and that girl married Carter Randolph, she was hailed as Madam Washington Randolph—Carter's elder brother, Peyton, and his family then becoming the "Other Randolphs." I write the qualifying word with a capital, because it was always so written—probably as a graceful compliment to Peyton's seniority.

Carter Randolph, by one of the articles of his marriage contract, became Carter Washington Randolph, and by another transferred himself to Washington Place. He died young, leaving Madam with four daughters; and shortly afterwards Washington Place was burned to the ground. It was characteristic of Madam that in rebuilding she permitted not the slightest deviation from the plan of the original mansion. Though among the Washington Randolphs there were only girls, there were boys enough among the Other Randolphs and the Prestons—from Tom Preston, who was understood to be doing brilliant things at the University, to Harry Randolph, the scapegrace, and, as is often the happy lot of scapegraces, the best-loved of them all.

An infusion of the foreign element gave us variety. There was an old Frenchwoman, who had the *entrée* to Madam's as being "of the best Huguenot blood in France." She had crossed the ocean with her husband, who after many vicissitudes was glad to find local habitation and daily bread as Professor of Ancient and Modern

Languages in a small Virginia college. When the Professor's health failed, and, opportunely, his son by a previous marriage succeeded to a Canadian Seignury and settled a pension upon him, the pair had drifted westward, renting from the Other Randolphins a cottage that had been formerly occupied by a tenant-farmer. There after her husband's death the widow remained. A characteristic anecdote followed Madame de St. Cyr from the little college town. As may be taken for granted from the wide field given the Frenchman, the institution was but poorly endowed, and the professors were permitted to send their cows to the campus for pasture. Madame de St. Cyr, who was nothing if not economical, at once purchased an animal and sent it there, but next day was waited upon by the janitor with a message from the President, to the effect that the cow must be removed. "But I thought that favor was permitted to the cows of *Messieurs les professeurs*," cried Madame. "Only the Methodist cows," gravely responded the man. The quick-witted Frenchwoman rose to the occasion at once. "*Bien!*" she cried. "*Monsieur est Huguenot, at moi aussi*, but we are not bigots, *mon dieu!* Rose Marie shall conform; she shall be *Méthodiste*." The President had a sense of humor, and the cow remained.

From Belgium, where she had spent her last year in Europe, Madame de St. Cyr had brought a broad-beamed, square-rigged handmaid, arrayed in the fashion of her country; and this little household was in-

creased, one autumn, by the arrival of a step-grandson. Funnily enough, from the early days of her coming among us, Madame de St. Cyr was known as Mrs. de St. Cyr, for it was felt there must be no interference with the Washington dignity.

Our other foreign family—English—was of a more plebeian sort. On the death of Carter Randolph, Mr. Tompkins had been brought from England to manage the estate—his position corresponding somewhat to that of an English land-steward. The Tompkinses were admitted occasionally to the tables of their superiors, but, metaphorically, below the salt. There had been, when they first came to Virginia, a Mrs. Tompkins, regarding whom I remember but one incident. With the greater ladies of the neighborhood she was dining with Mrs. de St. Cyr, on one occasion, when the latter, exhibiting with pride a very fine cheese that had just been sent her, scooped out what she considered a sufficient quantity, and sent it round. Richt, who never could be made to understand the order of precedence, happened to offer it to Mrs. Tompkins first, and she, supposing she was doing what her hostess intended, appropriated the whole, whereupon Richt returned to her mistress for more. "More!" echoed the Frenchwoman, her sharp eyes travelling round the table in search of the delinquent, whom she informed in broken but terse English that she had enough on her plate to kill her. Mrs. Tompkins died soon afterwards—not of the cheese, which she had meekly resigned, nor, let us hope, of the

fright, though Ernie always ascribed her end to that—and then Eliza Jane became house-mother. The child could not have been more than twelve at the time, but for modest confidence in herself, for coolness in emergencies, and for genuine good sense, she might have been twelve hundred. There were two brothers older than herself and one younger. They were all big for their age, while Eliza Jane was but a little thing—a little plain-looking thing too, with indifferent features, straight black hair, and the sallowest of complexions—yet they never thought of rebelling. Perhaps this was because she was not in the least a tyrant. The wildest schemes of the boys she would appear to consider, as if there might be a good deal to be said for them, and then she would calmly give an opinion. “Well, William Alexander, I can see that it would be very nice to do so-and-so, but if I were you, I would do”—something else. One point on which she felt strongly I remember her gracefully conceding. The boys’ sponsors in baptism had been so generous as to bestow on each of them at least two names, and Eliza Jane, who had been given by some one a little treatise on the sacredness of baptismal names, wished that these should never be abbreviated. But the boys were determined to be Wills and Jacks even as others of their kind, and at last the little mother yielded. “Well,” she said, but a little sadly, “since you wish it so much, dears. But as for me, I wish always to be Eliza Jane.”

I am sorry to have to confess that what she really said was "Eliza Jyne," for at that time she had a terrible pronunciation—compounded of her mother's Lancashire and the cockney dialect in which she had been brought up. She called a cup a "coop," and she would present herself before Madam, and respectfully ask, "If you please, Madam Washington Randolph, may Ernie and Jynie go out to ply?" We juniors had not met many English, and it was left to time to reveal to us that this proper young person did not speak the language of Victoria's immediate circle.

With her own and her brother's aspirates Eliza Jane struggled bravely. The father, on the contrary, while free from the other defects I have mentioned, was apt, whenever excited, to make havoc among his. Once, to our great delight, we heard him slaughter more than half a dozen of them (we counted them carefully afterwards) in a single sentence. A maiden sister, already known to us from Eliza Jane's reminiscences as "Aunt Jemima," had come out to him from England, resolved, so she told him, to "lay her bones beside his"; but after a terrible six weeks, in which she insulted her brother's employers, goaded Alexander into running away, and actually slapped our good little Eliza Jane, she shook the dust of Virginia from her feet, and returned to her native land. "I 'ad 'oped," said Mr. Tompkins to Madam, who was condoling with the good man, "I 'ad 'oped my 'ouse would 'ave been a 'appy 'ome for 'er."

I like to remember that Eliza Jane was not kept at a distance as her mother had been. The girls' old grand-aunts, indeed, Miss Pocahontas and Miss Garnett, who were supposed to supply the place of the dead and gone mother of the Other Randolphs, expressed strong opinions in regard to the inadvisability of mixing classes, and Mrs. de St. Cyr shrugged her shoulders in tacit agreement with them. But charming Mrs. Preston took the girl to her heart, and Madam had her educated with her own daughters. Soon, alas! there were not so many daughters to educate. The winter that brought Mrs. de St. Cyr's grandson to us brought also an epidemic that swept our part of Virginia, and in one short week Mattie and Mary were taken ill, and died, and were buried. They had been always, and truthfully, described as "quiet, pleasant girls," perhaps, to quote Ernie, a little borne down by being Martha and Mary in conjunction with Washington. Our little circle learned how sorely missed quiet, pleasant people can be. It touched us strangely too when, years afterwards, we discovered that one of these girls had been cut off in the budding of a true-love romance; that it was for Mattie Washington Randolph's sake that Tom Preston remained a bachelor all his life.

As time went on, with us as with her brothers Eliza Jane's opinions had weight. She set us right as calmly and kindly as she did them. Once, hearing little Nannie Randolph speaking of tame violets, "Tyme violets!" she exclaimed, but slowly and pleasantly as if she had been

coaxing a pet baby, "Who ever heard of tyme violets?" "Why, what would you say?" demanded Nannie. "Cooltivated, to be sure," said Mentor. "You may speak of tyme beasts or tyme birds, but never of tyme flowers." "I don't see why not," persisted Nannie. "We say wild flowers, just as we say wild beasts, and why shouldn't we say tame flowers just as we say tame beasts?" "Ah, but we don't, you know," said Eliza Jane.

CHAPTER II

It will be admitted, I suppose, by even the strongest believers in Divine Right that royal personages may have their peculiarities. It is with the utmost respect that I say the head of our royal house had hers. I think it is the author of *Ecce Homo* who remarks that there can be no virtue without enthusiasm; and I for one unhesitatingly accept that doctrine, provided I am permitted to regard Madam Washington Randolph as the exception that proves the rule. In my opinion, enthusiasm is itself a virtue. It cannot be called the greatest, because it does not always consider where it is going or stop when it has gone far enough; but it is at least that on which the success of the others very largely depends. Now, with every other virtue, Madam Washington Randolph was as little enthusiastic as an image of Buddha. Nor was her impassiveness—I do not like to call it coldness—the accompaniment of a commanding personal appearance that might have stamped it as a proper attribute of royalty. Madam was under the medium height and of slight figure, with good but by no means beautiful features, hair neither very dark nor very light, complexion neither blonde nor brunette, and eyes of no particular color. And yet she was so perfect in her manners and of such an innate dignity, that even Mrs. de St. Cyr, who stood in awe of no other human being, stood in awe of her. Perhaps I shall prejudice

you against her when I say that with her daughters she was as ceremonious as with the rest of the world. How it had been with them when they were very little I do not know, but in the days I remember, none of the endearments common between mother and child had any place in the Washington Randolph family. If as a loyal subject I ever had a treasonable thought, it was in thanking the fates for a mother who was not too great for laughter and for tears, for kisses and scoldings, and even for the occasional "good whipping" which in those benighted days was regarded as not only a mother's privilege, but her duty. One could sooner have imagined Madam committing a murder than administering even what her vicegerent, Mammy Sarah, referred to comfortably as "not to call a whuppin', but des' a li'l teeny weeny spank, now an' ag'in."

"A very disagreeable person your Madam must have been," you will perhaps say. But she was not. In the first place, there was nothing cross or morose about her aloofness. Then, though I don't pretend to explain how, this aloofness gave the impression of guarding against over-familiarity, not on our part towards her, but on her part towards us. The youngest of us was treated as courteously as the eldest. I never saw her kiss a friend's baby or take one on her knee, but she would shake hands ceremoniously with a toddler who scarcely knew hands from feet, and even with an infant in arms. And then she was, I really think, the most generous person I ever knew in my life—her liberality bounded by neither class, color nor creed.

As to education, Madam had that of her station and day. After a governess at home, she had been for a year or two at a certain fashionable French boarding-school in New York. In her reading she was omnivorous, and she used to give her opinion not only on books and writers, but on public affairs and public men, in such well-chosen words and neatly-turned sentences that for years the younger members of her circle fancied she was quoting passages committed to memory. William Ware, I remember, was a special favorite, and, often as I have heard her sum up his excellencies, I have never known her to vary a word. We grew so familiar with the eulogium that we used instinctively to watch—always most respectfully, be it understood—for a possible variation; but we always watched in vain.

It was years after the tragedy of the fire at Washington Place, and at least a year or two after these records begin, that being over at the Prestons', one afternoon, neither Ernie nor Janie present, I was taken aside by Sallie, and after being solemnly and repeatedly pledged to secrecy, informed that she "knew something." "Does Ernie know?" was my first question; and my curiosity was roused indeed when I learned that neither Ernie nor Janie must ever know, or at least know that we knew—that, in fact, the secret concerned Madam herself. Now, Sallie's last confidential disclosure—made to no fewer than five of us, one after the other—had been of a nature to linger in the memory and to create an appetite for more. A farmer of the neighbor-

hood had become unmanageably insane and had been taken away; and Sallie had been informed by one of the house servants that mad people were always smothered between feather-beds, and that the farmer had undoubtedly been taken away for that purpose. So now, horror-stricken, my first question was, "Has Madam gone mad?" Sallie at once relieved me on that score. But it took her till tea-time to inquire if I had ever noticed the huge stacks of novels piled in Madam's bedroom; till bed-time (for I remained all night to pursue the investigation) to divulge that Madam read these novels every night in bed; and I think it must have been about two in the morning that, after a peculiarly vicious prod, she at last gave up the secret: that it was the candles necessary for the nightly reading that had set fire to the former Washington Place. Our fagged appearance—Sallie's in particular—was remarked upon at breakfast. In advance of my day and generation, I had successfully practiced the "Third Degree."

Not for some time could I reconcile myself to Madam in this new light. When I finally did, she had come down from her pedestal a step or two, perhaps. But novel-reading in bed seemed to me a very human weakness and one with which I could heartily sympathize; therefore, I looked on her with new interest, if with less awe, and liked her all the better.

Between the two eldest of Madam's daughters—the "quiet, pleasant girls" who died—and the two younger, who were twins, there was a space of half a dozen

years. Mattie and Mary, every one said, were just what you would expect Madam's daughters to be; Janie and Ernie were in the nature of a surprise. Janie, the elder, was a merry soul; very like Ernie, but not *quite* so pretty; very nice, but not *quite* so nice. Every one acknowledged there was something more than beauty, something more than an air of birth and breeding, about Madam's daughter Ernestine. "*Eet ees esprit*," cried Mrs. de St. Cyr, "that so wonderful sometheeling that Americans and English so rarely possess that they have not even a name for it." Were we jealous that our Ernie had something none of the rest of us had? On the contrary, we would have rejoiced had there been ascribed to her some divine gift possessed by no other mortal.

Wherein consisted her charm, do you ask? How can I tell? Is charm capable of analysis? She was a beautiful child, and she grew into a beautiful woman; but the South used to be noted for its lovely daughters. She was clever; we used to quote her in childhood, and some of us have quoted her all our lives. But clever sayings and doings are apt to fall flat when reproduced in cold blood, without the circumstances that gave occasion for them and the air with which they were said or done. She was not perfect; had she been, we would not have loved her half so well. She ruled us; but never was government more entirely with the consent of the governed. "What will Ernie say? What will Ernie do?" were questions on the answers to which depended

generally what the rest of us would say or do. That it was impossible to predict the answers added of course to the interest of the situation; for of all the traits a charming person may possess, one of the most attractive is unexpectedness.

Not that Ernie's unexpectedness did not sometimes shock. Madam was actually startled out of her Buddha-like calm, on one occasion, when she heard her youngest daughter declaring that she was prouder of her Randolph blood than of the Washington strain. It was no slight to Madam, for her own mother had been a Randolph; but it was worse—why, it was sacrilege. But Ernie defended her position with spirit. "Well, mother," said she, "look at the figure the Randolphs cut in Scottish history, while the Washingtons were only little English squires—and, apparently, difficult to trace at that. I always fancy a Randolph dashing with lance in rest into the thickest of the fight, on a splendidly caparisoned fiery steed, and a Washington sitting like a graven image on a horse as solemn as himself. Oh, I know, of course, that Washington was great as well as good, but—do you believe he was very interesting? I have the same feeling about him that I have about Milton—that I would not like to have been his wife." Let it be remembered that it was the fashion of those days to represent the Father of his Country as impeccable and as stiff as Ernie's "graven image." I fancy it was a relief to others as well as to Ernie when it was

discovered or confessed that G. W. was not only good and great, but human enough to rap out a soldierly oath on occasion.

Most enthusiastic of all Ernie's friends and admirers was her sister Janie. We speak of "sisterly affection," but we have too often good reason to think it is not all it is cried up to be. But in the case of the Washington Randolph twins it was wonderful. A charming girl herself, and in the estimation of their friends ranking just after—and not far after—Ernie, some girls in like circumstances would have set up a camp and followers of their own. Janie would have thought that treason, even in circumstances where, as the elder—though but by a few hours—she might have been thought to have the right to lead. And the devotion was mutual. The most intimate friends of the pair were their cousins, Virgie and Nora (Eleanor) Randolph; Sallie and Rosamond Preston, Patty Clayton, and Eliza Jane. Except in Madam's family there were younger girls as well as boys. Ernie declared that Rosamond Preston was the one person in the world she envied, on account of her beautiful name, and she cried shame on any one who would have abbreviated it. "Think of it," she once said, "'Rose of the world'—the whole world! Think of the rose among other flowers: it's that! Think of the most beautiful rose in a garden of roses: it's that! Think of the most perfect rose in all the rose-gardens on earth: it's that! O—h!" And she threw out her arms, and her lovely dark eyes that could be by turns

merry and sad, looked out upon the world of roses she had conjured up with what we called her far-off look.

"Yes," said Sallie Preston, moved to bitterness by this eloquence to bitter realization of what she had missed, "and to think of mother keeping that name for my younger sister, and calling me Sallie! A Sallie in English stories is always a poor old woman—what they call 'a decent, tidy old body'—that the Squire's daughter or the rector's wife takes quarter-pounds of tea and red flannel petticoats to."

"But you are not in an English story," said Ernie, as soon as she could speak for laughing. "Sallie is an honorable name, and any name would be honorable linked with Preston."

"Even Jemima?" asked Sallie, roused to argument.

"Even Jemima," Ernie began, but broke off to laugh again. For Jemima, always to us the most hateful of names, was doubly so since we had known Eliza Jane's aunt. "No, like George, I can't tell a lie. I except Jemima."

CHAPTER III

If any of us in those days had taken to romance-writing, as even girls as young as we were sometimes do—I feel sure we should have made the newcomer at Mrs. de St. Cyr's our hero—him, or one other, of whom more presently. The grandson's place in our regard, however, would have owed nothing to the grandmother. Madam Washington Randolph, it is true, seemed both to like and admire the Frenchwoman—a fact which to this day I have been unable to account for; I am sure no one else did, and there were times when the juniors actually hated her. The only criticism of their mother I can remember hearing from either of the twins was touching this weakness. "I wonder at her!" exclaimed Janie, after strong provocation.

Ernie—who, notwithstanding the handsome compliment the Frenchwoman had paid her, was oftener than any of us at war with her—once confided to us that she reminded her of the Evil Genius of a fairy tale. She was old; she was ugly; she carried by way of wand a crutched stick—for she was lame, though her lameness did not interfere in the least with her agility—and, like all wicked fairies, she was malevolent when slighted.

But what chiefly brought her into ill-repute was her parsimony. Uncle Ab, in discussing her with Mammy Sarah, gave it as his opinion that "ole Mis' wa'n't no kin to dem Sugah-knots" (meaning Huguenots, whom he

supposed to be a French family of distinction). But our touchstone of aristocracy was not to be deceived even by the plebeian vice of niggardliness. "Dar's whar yo' misses it, Mistah Peyton," said she. "She's quality, but she ain't *our kin'* ob quality. We knows de kin' lak our family, an' we knows de r'arin', t'arin', sw'arin' kin', dat'll frow away de las' cent; but de kin' dat maks soup widout so much as a b'ar bone in it is a new 'sperience."

I question if in all the years she lived among us Mrs. de St. Cyr bought any clothes. Madam Washington Randolph was the most generous of friends, and it was the Frenchwoman's delight to go up with her to the attic, and from the old-fashioned but gorgeous relics of former generations (rescued from the fire when many things Madam valued more perished) select something for her own adornment. The influence she had over Madam was truly extraordinary. The latter, though herself, as I have already mentioned, a model of good breeding, never seemed to be annoyed at the bare-faced hints; and, far from finding anything ridiculous in her manner of dressing, which was simply outrageous, would have recourse to her as to a fashion book. "A pelisse which belonged to *pauvre Maman*," Mrs. de St. Cyr would say, displaying a rag of the time of the First Empire; or, "A *confection* which royalty has been pleased to approve, *chère amie*," appearing in what she called evening dress, but which Mammy declared to be only part of one, and in the upper half so small a part as to be "clean scan'lous."

How glad we were that Armand was only her step-grandson—really no relation at all, Ernie pointed out to us. We thought it a shame that she should share any part of his name, but felt thankful she did not share it all. She was Madame Pierre de St. Cyr; had she been Madame Armand, we could not have borne it.

But it was not only Armand's name that appealed to us. The boy had face and figure to correspond; also in his beautiful dark eyes there was that shade of melancholy which—Byronic tradition not being then quite exploded—was considered the proper thing for a hero. Then, young as he was, he had already had advantages of travel which none of the rest of us were likely to have in our whole lives. He was but a year older than the twins and Harry Randolph when he came to Virginia; but, judging from the number of places he had seen, his parents must have belonged to the Sect of the Peripatetics. Within a few months of each other they had set out on their last journey, leaving Armand to the guardianship of his uncle, Raoul de St. Cyr de Marignan, Seigneur of Beaulieu in Lower Canada—or, as it is now, the Province of Quebec. The Professor's first wife had been a de Marignan. The de Marignans had held high rank at the Court of the Bourbons, and more than one of them in the days of the Terror had sealed their devotion with their blood. While exiles in England, they had formed a friendship for St. Cyr—a man of good birth and courtly manners, and as lovable as his second wife was the reverse. But the de

Marignans were devoted Catholics, and neither their compatriot's personal virtues nor the fact that he was like themselves a sufferer for loyalty's sake could induce the Count to sanction the union of his sister with a Protestant. The marriage was a runaway one, and it was not forgiven. Meantime, on the death of the Canadian de Marignan, head of the younger branch of the family, without nearer heirs, the Seigneurie of Beaulieu came as a veritable providence to the Count's younger brother, who forthwith set out to take possession. England had been good to the exiles, and no discredit was attached to coming formally under her flag. On the death of his sister, the Seigneur, softened not only by her loss but by the fact that the Huguenot husband had neither interfered with her faith nor prevented her bringing up her sons in it, resumed relations with St. Cyr, and on the second marriage and emigration of the latter, undertook to provide for the boys, left in England to be educated. We gathered afterwards that the migration was the second's wife doing, and that her object in it was to settle herself and husband on the wifeless and generous brother-in-law; she, of course, to reign as lady of the manor. But the generous brother-in-law was no fool, and he could not bear the second wife. A moderate pension was settled on the pair, but on the condition that Madame should keep her distance. You may imagine that the wicked fairy had no love for the de Marignans—nor had she the slightest feeling of gratitude. The Seigneur, like his predecessor, died childless, and Raoul

succeeded him. St. Cyr had died before him, and on Raoul's accession his step-mother made another attempt to settle herself at Beaulieu. She was again unsuccessful. The pension was continued, but the condition of it remained stringent.

The late Seigneur, valuing money more than land, had parted with nearly half of his estate before his death. On the other hand, he had left almost untouched the fortune that had come to him with it (twenty thousand pounds passed for a fair fortune in the days when the American plutocrat was not). Raoul set himself to the task of regaining the lost acres. And fortune favored him. As it happened, the property in question was again thrown upon the market, and the Seigneur was able to secure it. Nor did his enterprise end there. Farms were opened up—to be rented, not sold; model cottages were built for the laborers; and I am afraid to say for how many miles you might ride with the Seigneur's neat fences on either hand. The Château also was to be partly rebuilt, for the older portion of it was dropping to pieces. Suddenly something occurred to change these plans, and to arrest even the work in hand; and the Seigneur, withdrawing entirely from society, shut himself up in the Château with two old servants. A handsome man with a great name and a picturesque estate cannot make such a change in his life without having it remarked upon. Was the cause financial embarrassment, or a disappointment in love, or remorse for a crime? The questions were not answered, and for

half a dozen years the recluse had been let severely alone, when a beautiful sister-in-law—accompanied by a little boy, and soon to be followed, it was understood, by her husband—arrived from abroad. Then succeeded swiftly the husband's loss at sea, the death—of a broken heart, it was said—of the wife, the rearing of an exquisite little chapel over her tomb, and the adoption of the orphan by the Seigneur. The last circumstance, it was hoped by mothers with marriageable daughters, would make the recluse an easier prey. But it did not; the Seigneur shut himself up more closely than ever. The picturesque old Château with its romantic setting had always been an object of interest to tourists. When the Gothic gem of a chapel was seen nestling among the trees, and the Seigneur's story was told—as much as was known of it, that is, with all manner of surmises thrown in—it became more interesting than ever.

The only intimate of the Seigneur—if intimate he could be called—was the Abbé Langevin. Père Langevin was also the boy's tutor. When repelled by his uncle—which Armand found was invariably the case whenever he attempted to bridge the distance between them—the child took refuge with the good Abbé. Between the two there was the warmest affection. But Père Langevin loved the Seigneur too—loved him first and most. Armand confessed to him that he found it difficult to love his uncle. "*Je l'admire,*" he said in his quaint, old-fashioned way, "*je l'admire beaucoup; mais je ne puis pas l'aimer.*" And then he asked if his want of af-

fection was a sin. "No," said the Abbé, "it is not a sin. Gratitude, respect, obedience, we can cultivate; love is not to be compelled." "But," he added after a moment, "never resent his coldness. For there will come a day when you will not only love him, but will pour out your heart to him in profoundest gratitude. Ah, my child, you do not know! you do not know!" Not for years afterwards did Armand "know" and never fully; but the tears in the Abbé's eyes, the words and the strong emotion that prompted them, touched the warm little heart and were never forgotten. And the question soon was, not whether he should ever love his uncle, but whether his uncle would ever love him.

Much as the good Abbé did to lighten Armand's loneliness, the boy did not thrive; he was breaking his heart for his mother. When not at his lessons, he used to haunt the little chapel till driven from it by fear of offending his uncle. The Seigneur seemed to haunt the chapel also, and whenever he found the boy there, when no service was going on, would scowl upon him darkly and send him away. The little parish church stood at the head of the village street, just outside of the gates of Beaulieu, and Armand was given to understand that that was the place for his extra devotions. And after a while, except when the daily mass was being celebrated, the private chapel was kept locked, with the key in the Seigneur's possession. Between the morose uncle and the sad but always uncomplaining nephew Père Langevin's hitherto light heart was often heavy, and had he

not been an optimist by nature and by grace, he might have been tempted to despair. He pointed out to the Seigneur at last that Armand was too white-faced and large-eyed for health, and was leading far too solitary a life for a boy of his age. It needed more than one appeal before the Seigneur took the matter seriously, but when he did, he settled it in the twinkling of an eye. "He wants a woman to look after him," said he. "He shall go to his grandmother in Virginia for the winter." This was far from being what the Abbé wished. "But is Madam not old?" he ventured to ask. "As old as the hills," grimly responded the Seigneur, "but she is always writing of the delightful young people about her, and I happen to know that the families are of the best." "But is she not a heretic?" asked the Abbé again. "An infidel more likely, but she will play she is whatever it is most for her advantage to be. But suppose you take the boy down there yourself and settle everything? There must be good priests somewhere near. Choose Armand's director, and let Madame de St. Cyr know that his stay with her—and the increased allowance I shall make—will depend entirely upon her not interfering." The event justified the Seigneur's prediction. Mrs. de St. Cyr became so confidential with his envoy that the latter gave it as his opinion, on his return, that far from interfering with the boy's faith, another hundred dollars would make her change her own.

The expedition to Virginia was the event of the good Abbé's life. And as for us, what a delightful thrill we

experienced when for the first time we saw the short stout figure with the long black soutane, the funereal-looking black-and-white bands, and the oddly-shaped beaver. We grew very fond of him before he went away, and were never tired of hearing from him of Armand's Canadian home, of the Seigneur, and of the great de Marignans. We heard of Armand's great-grandmother, the Countess, one of that heroic band who, carried to the Conciergerie and to the guillotine the same charming refinement and graceful courtesies practised at the court of their king. The men of the de Marignan family, the Abbé said, were all brave, the women all beautiful, and both men and women loyal and devout. Mrs. de St. Cyr, shrugging her shoulders incredulously, spoke of the type as having died out in France, but the priest gave her to understand that she was as much mistaken as was the prophet when he claimed to be the one person in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal. "It is a type," said he, "certainly not common at the Courts of the First and Second Empires (those were the days of the third Napoleon), but it lives yet in many a fair château and grey cloister both of old France and of new." When the Abbé went away, his letters were as eagerly looked forward to by us as by Armand, and with the exception of the passages concerning religion were common property.

We were never weary of questioning Armand about the Canadian Château. We heard with trembling delight of the great gallery where the de Marignan ghost

walked—a tale which he remembered having heard his father tell, but which he had had too much delicacy to inquire into at Beaulieu. He had never seen the ghost, but he described to us the gallery, which had that mingled air of grandeur and decay supposed to be peculiarly favorable to ghosts. The richly-wrought ceiling and panels had been brought from France. Dust and cobwebs hid their beauty—for the gallery was in the more ruinous part of the Château—and by the painted windows the sun entered but reluctantly through a score of years of neglect; but here and there a gilded rose or fleur-de-lis gleamed out from among its dusky surroundings. Much of the furniture and many of the paintings had been removed, but there was in it an antique cabinet, banished there from the library on account of a misdeed of Armand's. With his first knife he had cut in large letters on the side of it, "I love —," and was just beginning the name of the beloved when arrested by his uncle. Armand omitted certain details of the incident. The Seigneur had snatched the knife out of his hands, thrown it out of the window, and lifted his cane to strike. Armand, who had never been whipped, thinking his uncle was condescending to play, looked up at him and smiled. The cane, instead of falling, followed the knife, and Armand was ordered from the room. When next he entered it, the cabinet was not there, but was afterwards discovered by him in the gallery. What Armand told his new friends was that when he was old enough to discover

what he had done, he wondered that his uncle had not given him half a dozen canings.

"What name were you going to carve?" asked Ernie.

"I do not know. Fear, when I saw that I had offended, must have put it out of my head."

The Abbé took away from Virginia a lighter heart than he had brought to us. He had found not only the Seigneur's requisite, the "good priest," but among those who made up our little circle one of his own faith, who had undertaken to act as guardian for the boy. This was no other than our other hero, Mr. Fraser Preston, admired and beloved from our earliest days.

I have always thought anachronisms—in the form of people—delightful, and Mr. Fraser Preston was certainly the most delightful I have ever known. He was a man of tall, slight figure; refined, scholarly air; and at times the saddest eyes I have ever looked upon. I once heard a Scotch servant say of her master that whenever she looked at him she was "like tae greet." So, I am sure, was I, when at these times I looked at this dear friend of ours. Like Armand, he had an English—or rather, a Scotch—mother, and he bore her family name. He had also inherited from her or her family a good many opinions—some would say prejudices—that in our eyes only made him the more interesting. The Frasers had always fought for the Stuarts; this descendant of theirs might have been a Jacobite of the time of Prince Charlie. He had a painting of the Prince, before which it was Ernie's special privilege to offer a white rose

when there was one to be had for love or money. I remember an interesting little incident connected with the painting. Tom Preston, just in from hunting, was standing before it with his cap on, and Mr. Fraser, coming up quietly behind him, lifted it gently off, quoting that sweetest of the old Jacobite songs,

"I took my bannet aff my heid,
For weel I lo'ed Prince Charlie."

But you must not imagine that Mr. Fraser was in the least what is now called an Anglomaniac. He had the respect that all Virginians have for the land from which the cavaliers, their ancestors, came; and he used to remind us that English history up to the last quarter of the eighteenth century was our history, and forever our heritage. But Virginia was to him the fairest, the dearest, the altogether most desirable portion of the globe. Mr. Fraser, like Armand's uncle, led a very retired life. He had a delightful suite of rooms in the Prestons' roomy mansion, and there most of his time was spent. Ordinarily, the younger members of the family and their friends saw him only at meals and for an hour or two in the evening.

But what hours those were! For before this gentle soul in a frail body, who treated even the youngest of us with high-bred courtesy, we were in the habit of airing our opinions as freely as among ourselves; his reserve at such times being laid aside, and a very refined humor brought into play. He was our book of ready reference,

whether as to matters of history or conjecture, manners or morals. I remember Mr. Tompkins—who had not as fine a sense of the fitness of things as his daughter—telling us, apropos of a batter-pudding he was eating, that he “’ad ’eard ’er Majesty ’ad one for supper every night.” Eliza Jane received the information in respectful silence; the rest of us with open incredulity. Mr. Tompkins meant only to glorify the pudding; we felt that he had degraded the Throne. We took the case to Mr. Fraser. “I think, my dears,” said he in his whimsical way, “that the divinity which doth hedge a king must forbid her majesty supping on batter-pudding. That delicacy may, for aught I know, be served at Buckingham Palace daily. The British Constitution does not forbid it, and the Hanoverian Constitution of the present reigning family may be able to digest it. But, considering the hour at which her majesty dines, I fancy her supper consists of nothing more substantial than——” (here he paused and seemed to consider quite gravely) “of nothing more substantial than, let us say, a basin of arrowroot, enriched with a glass of crusty old port.” And then he went on to speak of the origin of folk-lore, and to express his belief that the nation’s opinion of the matter-of-fact nature of the present royal dynasty had crystallized in the myth of the batter-pudding. “Can you imagine such a legend of the Stuarts?” he asked. “You might fancy them quaffing rare vintages, golden with transmuted sunlight, or——”

"Cousin Fraser," put in Mrs. Preston archly, "a thousand pardons; but have I not read somewhere that the first of the English Stuarts had a passion for—— haggis?"

"Pooh!" said Mr. Fraser, but smiling in spite of himself, "the first of the English Stuarts was but a hybrid of Buchanan's latinity and Knox's divinity."

And then the two were off on an argument to which we juniors listened with delight. Mrs. Preston was a clever as well as a charming woman, but even her own children took for granted that in any clash of opinions Cousin Fraser must be right. Sallie Preston confided to us that she believed her mother thought him right herself, and only argued with him to arouse his interest, to "help him to forget." The exact particulars of what he was to forget Sallie owned she did not know, but she did know that he had had a great sorrow, and that it was connected with love. Thereupon Ernie decided that the beloved one must have died, "for, of course," said she, "no one in the world would ever refuse Mr. Fraser." "No, indeed!" said we.

No small part of our education we owed to Mr. Fraser. The elder boys and girls he interested in the English Reviews—multiplied, but scarcely bettered since that time—and *Blackwood*, and all of us in that gentlemanly wit, Mr. *Punch*. If we imbibed his prejudices with his tastes, they were at least refined prejudices. Thackeray he adored; Dickens he could not bear. Little Nannie Randolph once asked him the difference between them.

"The difference, my dear," said he, with less than his usual charity, "is, that one is a gentleman and the other is—not. And 'out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.' "

We were fond of finding the originals or duplicates of our friends in the books we read, but we never could place Mr. Fraser satisfactorily. An ultra-protestant governess, who had apparently read her Sue, was so ill-advised as to dream that he was a "Jesuit of the Short Robe," in America with sinister intentions—a vision for which we never forgave her. Years afterwards, *John Inglesant* reminded me somewhat of our friend, but seemed not nearly so delightful, nor so human.

With Père Langevin, Mr. Fraser, to our great surprise, not only laid aside his reserve, but appeared to cultivate him assiduously, while in Armand he was interested from the first. No wonder that the Abbé, bearing away the promise of his care for the boy he loved, believed that providence—or, as he expressed it, the Blessed Virgin—had put the thought of the journey southward into the Seigneur's heart. The "good priest" came but once a month to look after his scattered flock in our vicinity, but Mr. Preston would be near always.

CHAPTER IV

The incompatibility of "crabbed age and youth" has been said and sung, and never was age more crabbed than that with which Armand's youth found itself confronted. Well was it for the boy in beginning his new life that Mr. Fraser Preston amply redeemed his promise to the Abbé, and that he had in Ernie and her suite allies ready at any moment for action, offensive or defensive. While the Abbé remained, the Frenchwoman was all amiability, and with reason. She had raised such a wail to Madam Washington Randolph at having in her poverty to entertain a priest—all priests, she averred, being gluttons and wine-bibbers—and at the opportunity the guest, an enemy of her religion, would have for spying out the nakedness of the land, that Madam with her usual generosity offered the hospitality of Washington Place to the Abbé, and to Armand during the Abbé's stay. She even included Mrs. de St. Cyr herself in the invitation; and the latter, though she remained at home at nights to watch Richt, was never absent from a meal. You will gather that in some way she had forgotten to mention to Madam the allowance hitherto made her by her step-son, while the handsome increase promised with Armand was described as a pittance. To an old-fashioned Protestant like Madam, who occasionally discoursed to her daughters of "Bloody Mary" and the fires of Smithfield, and who prayed daily for the

conversion of her dear friend, Mr. Fraser Preston, it was a little trying to see the garb of Rome at her table. But the jolly Abbé won her as he won everybody, and with Armand was shortly included in her prayers. As for Armand, though he thought often and wistfully of the beautiful Canadian woods, and the river, and above all of the little Gothic chapel, the casket that held his jewel, he began to be very happy. He had not known there were so many kind hearts, so many delightful young people, in the world.

But when the Abbé departed, and he was transferred to what was to be his home, there was another story. The Frenchwoman had the true Napoleonic hatred for *perfide* Albion. Her stepsons' liking for the England in which they had been brought up was an additional reason for disliking them, and that the wife of Louis had been an Englishwoman was the strongest reason of all for disliking Armand. Mr. Fraser had thought it wise to leave the two to themselves for the first day or two, and for years afterwards Armand never recalled that time without a shudder. Question succeeded question in regard to all that was most dear and intimate in the boy's memory; questions as to the daily life of his father and mother, of their wanderings, of their relations towards each other and towards him. Armand, old for his age, was dazed with surprise, grief, and indignation.

On the third day, matters came to a head. "Have you no likeness of the Englishwoman?" was demanded at

last. Armand, who was well up in the history of the revolution that had done to death his ancestress, thought of the *sans-culottes*, who had called Marie Antoinette "the Austrian."

He had a small water-color picture, taken from a miniature which had belonged to his father, but which had been in the possession of his mother at her death. He had often wondered why his uncle had not given him that miniature, and often he had made up his mind to ask for it; but always when opportunity came, courage fled. And then, he had at least the copy. So far, he had shown it to none of his new friends except Mr. Fraser, and he produced it now with a swelling heart. When he heard the Madonna-like loveliness denounced as bold, and the costume—the regular evening dress of a lady—pronounced indelicate, and that by an old woman whose own evening dress revealed her yellow, skinny self to the extent that had earned Mammy Sarah's strictures, he could bear no more. "Give me the picture, if you please," he said. He spoke quietly, but something in his voice made the Frenchwoman look at him, and she read danger in the flashing eyes and white face. "Take it!" she said, and half threw it at him; so that the picture fell, the glass was shattered, and the face marred by the broken fragments. Armand rushed on it with a low cry as of one wounded to death; blindly gathered all up, even to the bits of broken glass; and fled from the house—down through the little garden and orchard and into the deep wood, where he threw himself, face down-

ward, on the ground, and, with the precious picture clasped to his breast, burst into a passion of tears. O for his cold, stately uncle, who had at least never been actively unkind, and who had been so good to his mother, and so devoted to her memory that the boy was half-grateful, half-jealous; for the kind-hearted Abbé, for his mother's tomb. His mother! what would she say to see her boy in such straits? She would not wish him to stay, and he would not. He had money; without a word to any one he would find his way back, hide in the grounds till he could gain access to the chapel, where he would secrete himself by day, and lie down beside his mother at night. The imaginative child found comfort in the pathos of such a fate. And as he went on to picture his uncle coming upon the still, cold form, some early morning, and in an agony of self-reproach lavishing upon the dead the love he had refused the living, his tears became less bitter, and, worn out by excitement and sorrow, he fell asleep.

There Mr. Fraser Preston, coming over to redeem his promise, and Ernie, whom he had run across in the woods, found Armand. He had turned his head on one side, so that the pale, sad face was easily seen, though the blood-stained hands were still hidden. The two stopped and looked; both with sympathy, Ernie—because she knew Mrs. de St. Cyr better than the man beside her—with indignation as well. "We won't wake him," said Mr. Fraser. "I will go on and see his grandmother, and by-and-by bring him over to the

Place; and you had better run home." "I will, in a minute," said Ernie, "and I won't disturb him." Mr. Fraser went on. And as soon as he was out of sight, Ernie knelt gently down, and, seeing the tears still on the cheeks, her own eyes overflowed and she whispered, "Oh, you poor, dear, motherless boy, I am so sorry—so very, very sorry for you!" and bending over him she just brushed the flushed forehead with her lips. Armand, roused by the movement about him, heard the whisper and felt the touch, but did not open his eyes till he heard the sympathizer stealing away. Then from beneath the long, dark, wet lashes he saw Ernie in full flight. The adventure was sweet—even in that sad hour—but he wondered if it was not also a little humiliating. Pity had doubtless prompted the kiss, and he did not like to be pitied. And yet, it would be pleasant to remember, when he had carried out his plan of running away. Then, the sadness of having to run away, the comparison of his lot with the happier one of all the young people about him, overcame him again, and once more he wept bitterly.

"My boy, my boy! what is it?" asked the kindest of voices. The handkerchief which had been used to staunch the flow of blood from the hand was now being used to dry the tears, with sanguinary effect. Mr. Fraser, coming suddenly upon the sight, was truly alarmed.

Armand, ashamed of being found crying, tried to hide his face, to protest that there was nothing the matter.

But who could resist Mr. Fraser? A minute or two more, and the two were sitting side by side—Mr. Fraser's arm around the boy, his handkerchief wiping the bloody face, and Armand sobbing out his tale. "Oh, sir, you are kind," he concluded. "Help me to get away!"

Now, it happened that the Abbé, entirely won by Mr. Fraser's kindness, had given him in confidence some idea of the state of affairs between uncle and nephew. He did not disclose in detail the cause of the uncle's coldness; but he intimated that it was connected with a deep wrong done to him by Armand's father. He spoke warmly of his patron, warmly of Armand, but he thought it for the boy's good that the two should be separated for awhile, and he declared that if he had searched the world over, he could not have found a happier home for the boy than with all these lively young people and their kind mothers, and with his good friend to keep an eye on him. He did not include the old Frenchwoman in his eulogy; for, simple-hearted as he was, he was not without shrewdness, and her profuse promises in regard to her charge and her fulsome compliments to himself had not had quite the effect she intended. But self-interest, if nothing more, he considered, would make her good to the boy—and then there was always Mr. Fraser.

Yes, there was always Mr. Fraser. And here he was now, tenderly comforting his charge, taking upon himself to promise that the incidents of that morning should never be repeated, assuring him he had not one but half

a dozen Virginian homes, picturing the delights of the long, beautiful autumn just beginning, and even telling funny tales of his favorite Ernie's doings. And when he had actually made him laugh, he asked how he would like to come to him daily for his Latin lesson, instead of taking it, as he was to take his English studies, with the other boys. And he ended by taking charge of the precious picture, promising that it should be returned to Armand as good as ever. The world seemed once again a pretty good world after all.

And then the two returned to Mrs. de St. Cyr's, and while Armand went to his little room with Richt to repair damages, Mr. Fraser had a talk with the frightened old woman that she never forgot. The sight of the bloody handkerchiefs, handed to Richt in her presence, gave her a wholesome shock. "*Mon dieu!*" Richt cried, "*elle va se trouver malade!*" And she would have fallen had not Richt caught her. When moved at all, it was in melodramatic fashion, and she had jumped to the conclusion that Armand had tried to make away with himself, and—which touched her more nearly—that her stepson would hold her accountable.

The Seigneur, doubly willing to do his duty by the boy, now that he had him at a distance—had at the Abbé's instance written to Mr. Fraser, expressing his gratitude for his interest, and begging him to exercise plenary powers in all that regarded Armand's welfare. Mr. Fraser, on his former call, had only made the ar-

rangement in regard to Latin; now he read Mrs. de St. Cyr a portion of the letter. The Abbé, the Seigneur went on to say, had spoken favorably of the climate and warmly of those who would be his nephew's associates. He had himself but one misgiving; perhaps it was a mistake to trouble so old a person as his step-mother with the cares of a child. However, that might be easily remedied. If Mr. Fraser should find that the arrangement interfered with either the comfort or the happiness of either, would he kindly remove the boy at once. Mrs. de St. Cyr listened to this extract with outward calm, but inward rage. Recluse as her stepson was, he had evidently still a spice of mischief in him. Next to the love of money, her strongest passion was vanity, especially as regarded her age; and he had not only threatened her with the loss of her income, but referred to her as "so old a person." She wondered if Mr. Fraser had read the passage to Madam, and wondered again what that minx, Ernie, might have said. When the wit with which the Frenchwoman had credited Ernie was exercised at the expense of others, she called it *esprit*; when at her own, she called it impudence and Ernie a minx.

The letter had its effect. But it did not make Mrs. de St. Cyr a saint, or even a converted sinner, but only a frightened sinner. And in one particular alone was the fright lasting. Armand had many disagreeables to bear, of which he never spoke; many mortifications, that spoke for themselves. But never again did the Frenchwoman

take in vain the name of his adored mother. And the rest Armand could bear, and was the braver and the better for bearing.

But his unhappy experience with Mrs. de St. Cyr, though the worst of his trials, was not the only one with which he began his life with us. Our boys, like a certain ancient people, could ride, shoot, and tell the truth; but, notwithstanding Madam's stately and Mrs. Preston's charming manners, were a little rough in their ways, a little apt to despise gentleness or what they regarded as an excess of good manners in one of their own sex and age. Armand's politeness was considered priggishness, his gentleness cowardliness, his ignorance of games worse than all. After a week or two, he began to find himself let severely alone. What was the use of asking "the little duffer" to join them when he did not know the first thing about playing? When the arrangement about the lessons transpired, there was a chorus of indignation. The Other Randolph boys and the Prestons had their lessons together with a tutor who lived with the former. He was an excellent classical scholar—Tom Preston's successes at the University were largely credited to him—and yet he was not considered competent to teach "the young Frenchman." And that Mr. Fraser should offer to do for him what he had never done for one of them was worst of all. Ernie guessed at once that the plan was a device of Mr. Fraser's to lengthen by an hour or two daily the time in which the boy should be away from his grandmother, but the boys laughed the explanation

to scorn. Bob Preston, who was the least liked of all our boys, put the question squarely to Mr. Fraser, who smilingly said that he had selected Armand's Latin because it was so much worse than theirs. Then, of course, the boys—half-unbelieving and altogether curious—never rested till they had prevailed on Armand to "say something in Latin." "What shall I say?" asked Armand, greatly embarrassed, but always willing to oblige. "Oh," said Bob, "you Catholics say your prayers in Latin, don't you? Say the Lord's Prayer." "I don't say my prayers in Latin," said Armand, "but I can say the Lord's Prayer," and he began. Have you ever heard a French nun say her prayers? "*Pat-air-noas-tair-qui-aice-eeen-say-leece*," she goes, in a sort of sing-song staccato, and entirely oblivious of quantity. Mr. Fraser told us afterwards that when St. Francis de Sales founded the Order of the Visitation, he decreed that his nuns should say only the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, because of the invariably bad pronunciation of Latin by his country-women. Now, Armand had had a French governess, so "*Pat-air-noas-tair-qui-aice-eeen-say-leece*," he began, but was stopped by shouts of laughter from his audience. Ernie, with her intimates, came upon the uproarious crew dancing around him like wild Indians. "What is the matter?" she demanded. "Oh," cried Bob Preston, delighted to show off before the girls, "French Latin is the matter. Listen to this, Ernie." And, kneeling in front of Armand, he crossed himself and began, "*Pat-air-noas-tair-qui-aice—*," but got no further, for Ernie, rushing in, boxed his ears

incontinent. "You irreverent savage!" she exclaimed. "You coward, to bully a boy younger than yourself, and to dare to make fun of Mr. Fraser's religion!" Bob jumped up, furious, but even he could not strike a girl. The laughter had ceased with the first blow. The others were indeed aghast. Ernie was their autocrat as well as ours, but never before had she had recourse to fisticuffs. Wythe Preston, Bob's elder brother, who had been an onlooker, not a participant, in the performance, was the first to recover himself. "It *was* cowardly, Armand," said he, "and I for one beg your pardon—and yours, Ernie," he added turning to the girl; "you served Bob just right. But the rest of us were almost as bad, and I for one am heartily ashamed of myself." "You ought to be," said Ernie majestically. And with her head high in air, and with the rest of us doing our best to imitate her, she marched away. Scarcely was she out of sight when Bob turned to Armand again. "Nice little boy!" said he, "that has to get a girl to fight his battles for him." "Come—none of that!" ordered Wythe, deciding that he would see Armand safe home. But Armand had placed himself in front of the bully. "You shall give me satisfaction," said he, in his quiet way, but with his eyes flashing—less with anger at Bob than with mortification that a girl had "fought his battles for him." Bob would have liked nothing better, but then there was Wythe. "Do you want your head knocked off?" asked Bob surlily. "Go home and say your *Pat-air-noas-tair*." "Shame!" cried

the others, and at the same moment Armand drew near and tapped him on the check. "You can't refuse now," said he. In a moment the battle was on. Twice Wythe separated the two by force, and as often Armand flew back to the conflict. There was, of course, but one ending possible; but Armand took home with a huge nose and a closed eye the respect of all concerned. "The little beggar is game," even Bob declared. And when the conquered, his honor satisfied, offered his hand, the conqueror accepted it sheepishly; and on the way home, taking the foe apart, actually offered to coach him in the noble art of self-defense.

That was a proud moment for Armand. And a dearer was coming. The very evening of the fight, in regard to which (strangely enough, Armand thought) Mr. Fraser seemed to find nothing to censure, that good friend took the boy to his rooms, and placed before his delighted eyes not only the neatly-repaired water-color, but a perfect copy of it. "Which will you have?" he asked. "Oh!" exclaimed the delighted boy, "the new one, if I may—not because it is new, but because you did it, while an ordinary artist did the other." Mr. Fraser seemed well pleased with his pleasure, though he had to stop his thanks almost by force. "If I could only do something for you!" sighed Armand. "You can; you can allow me to keep the other picture." Armand threw his arms impulsively around his good friend. "I would rather you should have it than any one else in the world," he cried.

And it never came into his head to wonder why Mr. Fraser wanted it.

CHAPTER V

Armand left us in the spring, but, his health continuing delicate, he returned to us every autumn for the five winters following. His coming was the great event of our year; his going would have been a greater grief than it was, but that it gave us his letters. I always think of the period between his first coming and the breaking out of the Civil War as the quiet years. True, all our lives before had been quiet enough; but from time to time the black shadow of death had fallen upon them, Madam had lost her husband and two daughters; her brother-in-law his wife; and Mrs. Preston a beautiful baby that, as the youngest member of our circle, was claimed and petted by all. Not once did the shadow of death darken the five years following; and looking across the gulf of war and all its attendant horrors, it is on these years that memory rests most fondly. They were years of joy, too—of the daily-renewed joy of daily-renewed pleasures; above all, of the joy that is a part of one's heritage, one's very being, in passing from childhood to girlhood. That was an era of simple pleasures, but what has the world brought us to compare with them? I am not of those who think that early youth is necessarily the happiest part of one's life; on the contrary, I am sure a great deal of nonsense is written on that score. But in the case of those who were young and, as Ouida would say, "of our Order," in the days of the

old South, there is indeed "no joy the world can give like that it takes away." No after prosperity, no honors, no belief even that what is is for the best, has ever obliterated, can ever obliterate, regret for the days that are no more.

And yet were I to try to chronicle these years I should fail utterly. They were of the happy years that have no history. Many dear memories we who lived them have of them, but dear only to ourselves, and only worth glancing at here. Shortly after Armand's first coming, and not long after she had boxed Bob Preston's ears on his account, Ernie began to treat him with great coolness. I told you she had her faults, and one of them was jealousy; not the mean desire of being first with every one and having the best of everything, but the craving to be first in the hearts that were first in her own. And in the case in question, she had the excuse that she had had what she desired, and, as she fancied, was about to be deprived of it.

Between her and Mr. Fraser Preston there had always been a very tender feeling. The Prestons knew—or, at least, suspected—that she was dearer to him than any of them were, and they had never been jealous of her; on the contrary, she had been at one time jealous of them, because they had the right to say, "Cousin Fraser." In vain Mr. Fraser offered her the same privilege, proposing himself as an adoptive or honorary cousin. Ernie rejected the offer with as much scorn as a love-sick youth does that of the maiden who proposes

herself as a sister. She had got over that feeling—partly because she realized that the situation was incapable of remedy, and partly that she felt herself securely first with their old friend.

But when Armand appeared, jealousy raised its head again. Not quite in the beginning. All that the Abbé had told of his devotion to his mother, his grief for her, his loneliness, had appealed strongly to her really generous heart. She intended to be kind to him, and she graciously approved of Mr. Fraser being kind also; she saw him as a sort of protégé jointly of Mr. Fraser and herself. But when she knew of his Latin privileges being supplemented by other hours in Mr. Fraser's study—where even the Prestons rarely intruded, and where she herself never went except with the white rose; often not breaking the silence if she saw him busy, but just touching the flower with her lips and then waving it towards him, before she put it in place—and when Armand in shy confidence showed her the picture of his mother, and could not say enough of Mr. Fraser's art, she brooded over this new state of things till an evil spirit took possession of her, and like one of the classic heroes she so much admired, she retired to her tent and sulked. When Mr. Fraser sent to tell her that the Prince's flower was dead, she said to herself that the new favorite might supply the roses. And there was one dreadful day, when—having either through penitence or because she was weary of sulking, decided to resume her ministry—she arrived at the Prestons', to find not only a fresh rose

but a new vase before the shrine, and Armand, apparently very much at home, arranging a whole bouquet of white roses. Were such things possible, or was this only a horrible dream? Not only her flower—which, she admitted, had had time to be thoroughly withered—but the vase, her gift, discarded! Ernie, as usual, acted first and thought afterwards. It was the work of a moment to dash rose and vase to the floor, and to snatch the nosegay from the astonished Armand and throw it out of the window. As she was flying from the room she was arrested by Mr. Fraser, and when she was capable of listening to him, Armand has disappeared. Mr. Fraser never scolded, and now he only told Ernie the facts. Armand, supposing the neglect of the Prince owing simply to a failure in the supply of flowers, had been searching the neighborhood over for a supply, and was actually on his way to Washington Place with the bouquet when it was so unceremoniously disposed of. As for the vase, a careless servant had broken it, Mrs. Preston had replaced it, and Mr. Fraser himself had placed the rose in it. Ernie's face, which always grew pale when she was angry, grew red as she listened. She hated being ridiculous, and this was a veritable tempest in a teapot. There was still the hurt of feeling herself second where she had been first, but she was too proud to speak of it. But Mr. Preston knew, and he was kind, tender. There were reasons, he said, why Armand was dear to him—reasons which she would in all probability know sometime, but which for the present she must take on trust—but nothing could interfere with his old affec-

tion for her. His wish and hope had been, and was yet, that she and Armand should be the best of friends. Ernie was not given to tears—she knew no greater mortification than for any one to see her cry—but she had to wink hard now to keep the tears back. She left the Prestons' happier than she had been for days; proud that Mr. Fraser had confided to her the fact of there being reasons for his affection for Armand, and interested, but not curious, in regard to what these reasons might be. And she stopped, when she got outside, and picked up the roses she had treated so unceremoniously.

I spoke of Armand's letters. But in what is said now of his life at the Château, as in what was said in a former chapter, it must be understood that I am putting with the contents of his letters much that we learned in after years, and mainly from others. In the letters the Seigneur was always dutifully and even affectionately mentioned, and the ample provision made for the boy's comfort and enjoyment gratefully dwelt upon. But uncle and nephew were no nearer than before. Armand had an English tutor who lived at the Château, but without interfering with the privacy of its master; indeed, it was probably to insure this privacy that young Harcourt had been admitted under his roof, instead of being lodged in the village. He and Armand had their meals together, with a special servant to wait on them, while the Seigneur lived as he had lived, attended by old André and his equally old wife. Père Langevin, still the chief means of communication between the Seigneur and his

nephew, had *carte blanche* in providing for the latter. "Anything in reason," the uncle had ordered, and the Abbé lived up to his orders. So we read of shooting and fishing and camping expeditions; of visits to Ottawa and Montreal and Quebec, and even further afield; and of scouring the country round on horseback. It was matter of surprise to us that Mr. Fraser, "a scholar and a ripe and good one," should seem more interested in these details than in those connected with Armand's studies. But, indeed, it had been the same when the boy was with us. "I want you to be a man of action, not a dreamer," we had heard Mr. Fraser say more than once to him. There was certainly a dreamy vein in him—perhaps an added attraction to girls, since we knew it did not make him less brave. His special chum was Harry Randolph, our dear scapegrace; but though he shared Harry's adventures and ran Harry's risks, he seemed to do so more from an amiable wish to please his friend than from any real enjoyment in them. And he was fond of wandering off alone, with no special purpose in view—which struck the gregarious young people about him as very odd. When we asked what he had been doing, he would say, "Oh, I was just thinking." Then Mr. Fraser would say, "Learn to *act*, my boy." Ernie on one occasion, overhearing this advice, said, "Why, Mr. Fraser, you are always warning me to think." Our good friend only smiled, but when next he made us a present of books, which he was in the habit of doing frequently, Ernie had *Learning to Think*, Armand *Learning to Act*, and Bob Preston *Learning to Feel*.

As for us who remained among our mountains, summer and winter, our education was going on too. The Southerners of ante-bellum days are sometimes charged with having regarded the North as a country of "base mechanicals." Our little group thought of it as nothing worse than a nursery for tutors and governesses. These useful men and women were treated with the respect and kindness they deserved. The tutors were spoken of by our elders as "most excellent young men," a term, I have observed, almost invariably applied to such youths as are more appreciated by fathers and mothers than by their children—their marriageable daughters especially. They were generally themselves in training for some profession—oftenest the ministry. Occasionally, one of them would embrace with ardor the theory of the divine origin of our "peculiar institution," in which case, when he became a full-fledged reverend, he was apt to settle where he could get the benefit of it. The governesses, if less "excellent" than the tutors, were also less stiff, and consequently more popular; all the more so that most of them had left school but lately themselves. The one we liked least was a very beautiful girl, whom the Other Randolphs secured, and who in turn secured Lawrence, the heir of the Other Randolphs, a dashing West Pointer; and when the war broke out, proved to be as great a fire-eater as if she had been born in South Carolina.

For three years after the rose episode, Armand and Ernie were the best of friends. Then occurred an af-

fair, comic enough to look back upon, but to us at the time the very soul of tragedy. The Wicked Fairy was, of course, at the bottom of it, Mr. Fraser Preston's temporary absence giving her her opportunity. Mrs. de St. Cyr's liking for Armand had not increased, but quite the contrary; though with Mr. Fraser and the powers with which he was armed constantly before her, she had not dared to show this openly. Now, however, her chance having come, the old woman, as Uncle Ab said, "tuk her muzzle aff an' showed her tooths."

Armand's generosity gave her occasion. There was in the neighborhood a family of poor whites—shiftless, improvident, and greedy; and Armand, being approached, one cold day, by the eldest boy, who certainly looked miserably ill, with a petition for an overcoat, impulsively gave the only one he had brought with him, the handsome garment he was wearing; intending, of course, to buy another. Now, under one pretext or another, Mrs. de St. Cyr invariably managed to appropriate the lion's share of the boy's allowance, and felt aggrieved accordingly. And she was not one to bear a grievance in silence. After a tirade on wicked extravagance, pampered grandsons and suffering grandmothers, she absolutely forbade the intended purchase, took possession of Armand's money, and said she would herself provide an overcoat. And she did. In addition to the departed Monsieur de St. Cyr's wardrobe, she had in her possession a huge chest of ancestral raiment brought from overseas; and she now disinterred from this chest a be-

caped and befrogged cloak of bottle-green, with a great metal clasp at the neck, which she declared just the thing for her grandson's winter wear. Armand would much rather have gone without an overcoat, but this was not permitted. A bare mention of the case in writing to the Abbé would have brought instant relief, but Armand had high ideas of filial obedience, and—though it cost him much—appeared in the bottle-green. His friends at first thought it was a joke, got up for their amusement, and jested freely about it. Through Harry, who had been with him when the overcoat was given away, and who had wrung from him certain admissions, the truth transpired. Then Ernie's scorn of Armand for yielding was almost greater than her indignation at his grandmother. Sallie Preston declared that the contrast between the cloak and the boy's high-bred, delicate features and general air of distinction brought tears to her eyes; had it done likewise to Ernie, they would have been tears of rage. After coaxing and threatening had been tried in vain, Ernie had recourse to ridicule; and it was after seeing a counterfeit presentment of her grandson in the ancient cloak and reading the clever verses under it that the Frenchwoman proceeded to reprisals. Hearing Madam speak of new winter wraps for her daughters, she persuaded her that nothing to be had in Baltimore or New York could equal in richness and goodness the excellent materials ready to hand in the attic, which, with a pattern she happened to have, could be made over by their clever seamstress in no time;

persuaded her also to keep the matter a secret—a delightful secret, she called it—from those most concerned till the articles should be finished. In the matter of dress, Madam was as wax in her hands. They went up to the attic together, and there, among a stock of old garments saved from the fire when things Madam valued much more perished, the Frenchwoman's malice was gratified in finding a couple of silk dresses the very color and shade of Armand's cloak. They had belonged to Madam's aunts, and were made with the short waists and immense gigot sleeves which you may see in pictures of Queen Adelaide and her contemporaries. Producing her pattern, which—providentially, she said—she had slipped into her pocket, Mrs. de St. Cyr had the happiness of seeing the seamstress at work before she left.

What happened at Washington Place the morning the cloaks were produced we never knew, but we could imagine. Janie, though she probably laughed herself into hysterics when she saw them, would not enjoy appearing in public in them, but she would make up her mind to save the situation by laughing with those who laughed. But Ernie would settle matters in no such way; for the first time in her life she all but refused to obey. Madam was such a reasonable, such an indulgent mother, in so far as her daughters' tastes and wishes were concerned, that, could she only have had their side of the question calmly presented, I am sure she would have allowed the obnoxious garments to be laid aside. Unfortunately, she had quoted their enemy in support

of them, and Ernie, enraged at the Wicked Fairy, did not mince her words. After that, the cloaks had to be worn. To make the affair more trying they were worn first to a little meeting-house where, on Sunday mornings, preachers of different denominations were accustomed to hold forth, and where Madam, though a staunch churchwoman, thought it her duty to send her family with the governess, when there was no service in their church. Ernie might have pleaded headache and remained at home, but she would not. The rest of us were gathered about the meeting-house door when a remarkable sight appeared: two figures, in long cloaks, such as are worn by an Order of Roman Catholic Sisters (the Wicked Fairy had cut yokes from the waists and then directed that the entire skirts should be gathered on to these), but with holes cut in the sides, into which the gigot sleeves were inserted. This in an era of graceful raglans, with polka sleeves, close-fitting at the top and flowing at the lower end. The wind blew and the cloaks flew, while the gigots remained as stiff as if they had been made of iron. We were silent with surprise; motionless, too, instead of rushing to meet them as we usually did. They were close upon us when Eliza Jane spoke:

"Will you look at the Misses Washington Randolph!"

She spoke innocently, admiringly—for to Eliza Jane everything the Washington Randolphs said or did or wore was admirable. She knew the quality of the silks in the attic, and she had no idea but that the style into

which the Queen Adelaide gowns had been transmuted was fashion's very latest. Unfortunately, at the very moment she spoke, Armand, in the ancestral cloak, understanding styles better than Eliza Jane, and also understanding now the malicious meaning of the hints his grandmother had been dropping, stepped forward and joined the pair; his one thought to make the situation a little less trying for them. That it did not you may readily imagine. The conjunction of the three figures would have made a saint laugh, and was to Ernie as a spark to gunpowder. She could have killed Armand. Instead, she advanced upon Eliza Jane with flashing eyes and flaming cheeks, demanding,

"Does Miss Tompkins see anything remarkable about the Misses Washington Randolph?"

Miss Tompkins might truthfully have replied that she did, but for almost the first time in her life she lost her presence of mind. Was it really her adored Ernie who had just spoken? Not knowing what it was best to do in such unwonted circumstances, she hid her embarrassment, as older people often do, under a smile. Hers was a very wistful one.

I wish I had not to tell you what happened next. Ernie saw the smile, but was too angry to see the wistfulness. Quick as lightning, a small hand flashed through the air and came in contact with Eliza Jane's cheek. Had Ernie been fated to live a thousand years, I am sure she would never again have known the self-contempt she felt next minute.

But the deed was done. And just then the service began. One of the smaller sects was having its innings that day, and Mr. Coon, a jolly farmer and miller, was acting as precentor. Generally it shortened the tedious service for us when he thus officiated, for he sang as Mr. Chadband spoke, calling "to" "toe," etc. But though he outdid himself that day, we sat unresponsive and sad; seeing nothing but what we tried not to see—the grief-stricken face, one cheek deadly pale, the other bearing in scarlet four finger marks.

That was a miserable day. Ernie left before the service was quite over and Janie with her. None of us dared to go to Washington Place that afternoon, nor had we the courage to go to Eliza Jane's, though each of us kissed her as we parted from her on the way home. Sallie Preston, who by this time kept a journal, made a most doleful entry in it that night, ending by wondering if life would ever seem the same again.

Life did. Next day, Ernie managed to get us all to Washington Place—for a reason. She had often said there was one kind of pride she could not understand, the kind that refused to make reparation when it saw itself in the wrong. This brave saying was now to be put to the test. And I am sure that we had never loved her so well as when in the presence of Madam and the governess she begged Eliza Jane's forgiveness. "I shall hate this hand forever," said she, glooming upon the offending member in quite Cranmerian style. But Eliza Jane, all smiles and happy tears, caught the hand and

kissed it, and held it to her rejoicing heart, and loved Ernie better than ever.

The part Mrs. de St. Cyr had played coming to the knowledge of her grandson, something new and strange occurred. The Frenchwoman could not believe her ears when the boy whom no personal mortification could bring to the point of rebellion confronted her on behalf of his friends. She raved, she threatened; she would send him home to his uncle in disgrace, she vowed. But her days of bullying Armand were over. "I am going home to my uncle," said he, "unless you undo at once the cruel thing you have done; but the Seigneur is a just man and he will know whose is the disgrace." Mrs. de St. Cyr, fairly conquered, burst into tears; and going to Madam, bewailed her *affreuse* mistake, and declared that after having been the means of such a misfortune, she would never have a happy moment till the garments were withdrawn. Madam must have felt dazed, but she had been charmed with Ernie's humility in the matter of the apology (I fear that with us all the *amende* had quite thrown into the background the slap), and an order for proper wraps was sent to Baltimore. Nor was the bottle-green ever seen on Armand again.

No sooner was the affair thus settled than the selfish old woman had the audacity to make a bid for the silks. They were too old, she saw now, for such charming *jeunes filles*, but for one of her age they would be a *reflet* of days forever gone. And she would undoubtedly have been permitted to carry them off but for an inspira-

tion of the governess. "They would make delightful dressing-gowns for the young ladies," said she, "with the sleeves turned upside down and flowing loose, and with cord and tassels added." The young ladies were pleased to approve, and—the time being at hand when new garments of any material were a rarity—wore the renamed silks for many a day.

Eliza Jane, meanwhile, was being besought by Ernie to name something that might be done by way of amends, and at last she ventured to beg that Armand might be restored to favor. "He looks so unhappy," said she, "that it makes me quite miserable to look at him." It did not occur to Eliza Jane to ask what he had done, but some of us had less delicacy. "What did he do?" we asked boldly, on learning that peace was declared. "Oh, nothing," said Ernie, which was exactly the truth. But she graciously forgave him, all the same.

CHAPTER VI

In the year in which Armand came to us for the last time, it was understood, when he would spend an entire winter with us—everything began to happen. That was the eventful year eighteen hundred and sixty.

In the spring of that year, Eliza Jane, in her usual modest way, made a delightful suggestion. It was a standing grievance of ours that we who were together every moment of play should not also be together at work; and we were discussing this sad state of affairs, one day, as we had discussed it hundreds of times before, when Eliza Jane inquired, "Why not have a school?"

It may seem strange to you who live in these days of "mergers" and combinations of all sorts that we had never thought of such a thing. We looked at each other, drew a long breath, and then Nora Randolph voiced the general sentiment, "It is too good to be true!"

But there was one among us who did not think so. "On the contrary," said Ernie, "it is too good *not* to be true!" How she managed it we never knew. It had always been understood that the twins would spend their last school years at the fashionable New York school that had had the honor of "finishing" their mother. But I fancy that after the loss of Mattie and Mamie, Madam was none too anxious to part with those who were left, and yet for our increasing years and growing minds some one older

and wiser than our girl-governesses was needed. At any rate by the end of the summer a schoolroom was built at our favorite gathering place—a corner of Madam's land that was nearest both the Prestons and the Other Randolphs, named by Sallie Preston the Tryst. And with hitherto undreamed-of enterprise our elders advertised, and the result was Miss Bixby.

It was the old Miss Randolphs who insisted on Miss Bixby being chosen, *because she wrote in the third person*. "Miss Bixby, having just returned from the delightful Island of Hawaii," the letter began. "She at least understands *les convenances*," said Miss Pocahontas; and, satisfied on that point, she bore down all opposition. We were delighted. "It is all one to me," said Ernie, "whether she writes in the third person or the hundred-and-third. I am thinking of all she can tell us." So we used to gather at the Tryst, in the long vacation before her coming, and dream and discourse of southern seas, and coral reefs, and palms, and cannibals, and could scarcely wait until the accomplished traveller came.

And in truth we could not have dreamed in a lovelier spot. When I live again in the long ago, as people growing old do, it is almost always there we are. It was on the highest part of the bluff overlooking the river—the swift, beautiful river, whose sudden floods made it as dangerous as beautiful. Trees—in the late autumn of every shade of green and russet and crimson and gold—covered the upper part of the bluff, and even to the very

edge of the water cropped out among the picturesque crags that tried to dispossess them. A judicious thinning of the greenery gave us a view while leaving us the shade. Long before the era of the schoolhouse there had been rustic benches there, and even an arbor, whose honeysuckle, wandering to the neighboring boughs, intermingled with the trumpet and wild grape. But benches and arbor were for our seniors who would sometimes picnic with us there; we preferred the soft, warm, mossy ground. Since those days I have looked on many a more famous scene, but seldom on a lovelier. I suppose it is on the compensation principle that so many of the classic streams are muddy and so many of those unknown to fame clear and beautiful. Mr. Fraser, who had travelled so much, scouted Tiber by comparison: "*Vorticibus rapidis et multa flavens arena.*"

But to return to Miss Bixby. By the time she came, another pupil had been added to those furnished by her patrons. Polly Coon—whose name, the Miss Randolphs averred, was sufficient to betray her origin—was the spoiled child of the well-to-do farmer and miller, already mentioned, who, thinking nothing too good for Polly, waited on Madam to ask admission for her. She was a beautiful little blonde, whose angelic appearance and baby-like manner of speech were in striking contrast to her naughty ways. Her mother was dead; and though at that time Polly was but five, Mr. Coon's elderly maiden aunt, who kept his house, frankly owned that she was "beyond her." She was as bright as she was

mischievous. Her accomplishments were dancing breakdowns and making faces, and her proud father was in the habit of having her up to display one or other of these for the entertainment of any caller or passer-by. "Polly ain't never been to school," was Mr. Coon's way of stating the case, "but her Aunt Nancy's been a-learnin' her her letters nights, and now she can spell all her parts." And then by way of additional recommendation he ordered her to "pull a nice face for Madam." This alone would have settled the matter adversely had the child's motherless condition not appealed to Madam's kind heart. Polly was admitted provisionally; and once in, it was impossible to get her out.

Miss Bixby, the paragon, came. The matter of age having been referred to in the correspondence with her, she had described herself as "past her first youth." She had not exaggerated. She proved to be a woman of forty or more—gaunt in figure, with an inadequate head of hair gathered into a small wisp behind, and a scant-patterned gown, the skirt of which fitted almost without a wrinkle over a small hoop-skirt; this when the rest of the world revelled in enormous crinoline and waterfalls. The gown was of dark print for the schoolroom, of sad-colored stuff for full dress. With the print went a crochet collar, finished by a bow, which, whatever its color, was constructed with strict regard to the points of the compass; two stiff, flat bows pointing respectively northeast and northwest, and two stiff, flat ends pointing southeast and southwest. With the sad-colored stuff

went an embroidered collar, fastened by a shell cameo—I wonder if you are old enough to remember the kind. A youth and a maiden simpered at each other, a dog barked, a stream turned the wheel of a mill, and a tree of no known variety overshadowed the whole. The thing was large enough to hang on the wall. Miss Bixby looked as little suggestive of tropic islands, or the adventures we had anticipated hearing, or that knowledge of *les convenances* which the Miss Randolphs had fondly ascribed to her, as you can conceive; so little indeed that Miss Pocahontas never rested till she had asked her how she came to write in the third person. Miss Bixby frankly told her that she had seen the form recommended in a *Book of Etiquette*. Our female Chesterfields would have sent her off forthwith; but Madam, always just, reminded them that they had been the chief instruments of her engagement, and insisted that she should have a fair trial.

There was another who looked askance at the new-comer, and one with a good deal in her power. We among the mountains, though we lived in refinement as well as abundance, did not keep the state of our kinsfolk in the old places. We had fewer servants; and invariably with us, as sometimes with them, a turbaned, snowy-kerchiefed slave discharged the duties that in England pertain to a silken-gowned housekeeper. Mammy Sarah had been the Washington Randolphs' nurse; but as her charges grew up and had their young attendants, one duty after another had been entrusted

to her, till at the time of Miss Bixby's coming she was really her mistress's right hand. Like a good many others among the old-time house servants, she considered herself as good a judge of "quality" as her mistress. Her knowledge of blood ties, and alliances, and misalliances, was wonderful. Had the genealogical records of all the families in which she took an interest been destroyed, they might have been rewritten from Mammy's memory. And in the matter of nipping in the bud unfounded pretensions, she was merciless.

The Smitherses were a case in point. When Major Clayton, after running through the greater part of his fortune, brought his wife west and bought land in our neighborhood, he was followed by one of his creditors, whom he could only pacify by making over to him half of his purchase and several of his slaves. Once in possession, Smithers gave out that he intended to settle among us, and forthwith proceeded to build a house of some pretension; and as he was rich, though of low origin (it afterwards transpired that he had been a slave trader), he was mortified to find that he and his were as severely let alone as the Claytons had been cordially welcomed. Wearying at last of the isolation, the Smitherses took the initiative. Going out on the pillared veranda, one morning, Mammy Sarah found waiting there one of the Smithers servants, bearing to Madam Washington Randolph an invitation to tea. The girl was one of those who had belonged to Major Clayton, and as such Mammy had smiled on her; but now, meeting

her from a different stratum of society, she gazed on her without so much as winking. Chloe delivered the message—a verbal one—with which she had been charged, and then there was an impressive silence. “Chile,” said Mammy at last, speaking softly, as if more in sorrow than in anger, “yo’s made a awful mistake. Mis’ Smuvvers nebeh done sen’ no invitation to Madam Wash’n’t’n Rando’ph, for Mis’ Smuvvers *dunno* Madam Wash’n’t’n Rando’ph.” Chloe attempted an explanation, but Mammy would have none of it. “Go home, chile,” said she, “go home; an’ nex’ time yo’ sets out wif a invitation, fin’ out fust whar yo’ bound foh.” You perceive that if part of Mammy’s greatness had been thrust upon her, part of it had been seized by the high hand.

Some of Madam’s governesses Mammy had liked, to some she had been indifferent; all had been patronized by her, but in a good-natured way. “Dey’s nuffin but chil’n deyselves,” she had sometimes pleaded in palliation of some shortcoming. But Miss Bixby was regarded with more critical, less friendly eyes. Her rusticities were as patent to Mammy as her mature years. I fear she positively disliked her. But however little she may have felt was her due, considered in her proper person, she realized that it would never do to treat with open disrespect the governess of the Washington Randolphins. So in the presence of others her feeling generally relieved themselves by exaggerated deference. Even when questioned by her confidant, Uncle Ab, she only tossed her head and said, “I maks her keep heh distance.”

But when alone with Miss Bixby she "took it out on her." When a stranger came among us, the first question the little ducky specially assigned to her asked was, "Please, ma'am, what's yo' gib'n name?" And scarcely would the answer be out ere Miss Smith or Miss Jones would find herself transformed into Miss Ann or Miss Charlotte, or, if she had no objection, Miss Nannie or Miss Lottie, according to the kindly custom of the South. With Miss Bixby, however, Mammy took the questioning on herself, and on learning that the "gib'n name" was Mehitable, shook her head, sighed, and remarked coldly, "Specs yo' betteh keep on bein' Miss Bixby." She was provoked to find that the unpopular one noticed nothing amiss in the arrangement. "Why, of course," said Miss Bixby.

It could hardly have been by chance that Mammy assigned to the newcomer the ugliest and most perverse little ducky on the place, Gusty, who, on account of enormous lips that projected so far she could see nothing under them, had been renamed Disgusty by scapegrace Harry. Miss Bixby had a sample of her usefulness the first day. In the midst of her unpacking, Disgusty elected to drop a pitcher of water, and while Miss Bixby was standing over her, adjuring her to remedy the mischief, she calmly laid down her towels, placed her arms akimbo, and, still kneeling, inquired, "D'ye 'hoop?" "Oh, go on, go on!" implored the other. "D'ye 'hoop?" leisurely repeated Disgusty. "Will you go on," implored Miss Bixby. "The water will get to the room be-

low—and I don't know what you mean." "She means *whup*," shrilled a small voice from the landing. The kneeling handmaid nodded in affirmation, smacking her palms together by way of illustration. Nor was a towel lifted till Miss Bixby had said no, and Disgusty had wasted another precious moment in intimating that she should have said yes. "I would'n trust yo'," said she.

Perhaps it was to propitiate Mammy that Miss Bixby, with less than the discretion of one "past her first youth," ventured to express to her her pity for her condition of servitude. Mammy flung back her sympathy with such indignation that the governess felt obliged to apologize, but could scarcely believe her ears when she heard that the boon she imagined every slave coveting had been offered and refused, and that to Mammy's mind there was nothing in freedom to be compared to her greatness and glory as she was. "I 'scuses yo'," she said with dignity, "cos yo's fum de No'f. But if yo' has a hank'rin' afteh free nigghehs, des yo' step into Yaller Sal's de fust time yo' goes in dat direction. But don' yo' eben me to dat trash."

Miss Bixby, who had an inquiring mind, made a point, first, of discovering the exact location of Yaller Sal's residence, and, second, of turning her steps in that direction when next she took her walks abroad alone. At the door of the little cabin, stood a fat, good-looking, extremely untidy mulatto woman, with a good many children about her. Miss Bixby noted with interest that the girl who sat crocheting on the door-step was many

shades lighter than her mother; that the baby crawling about in almost a state of nature was jet black; while in the others there seemed to be an increasing tendency to blackness the younger they were. She thought it might be a case of cumulative atavism, so to speak. She got into conversation with Yaller Sal and found her affable. Here would be an interesting subject for her next letter to her minister's wife—interesting enough to insure its being read at the Wednesday night prayer-meeting. So she drew from the mulatto the tale of her manumission by the will of her late master, and a good many other bits of information. "And how long have you been a widow?" asked she, when Yaller Sal had finished. "A *what?*" drawled Sal. "A widow. How long has your husband been dead?" Yaller Sal looked as puzzled as ever. "Honey, I ain't nebeh had no husban'," said she. "Oh, I thought these were your children," said Miss Bixby. Comprehension dawned in the mulatto's eyes, and she burst into a great guffaw. "Laws, honey, yo's fum de No'f, yo' is. Yas, dem is my chil'n, ebry las' one o' dem, but I ain't nebeh had no husban' yit." And her laugh rang out again, and the girl who was almost white laughed with her, and the rest of the contingent grinned in sympathy. And Miss Bixby, blushing as if she had been sixteen instead of six-and-forty, or thereabout, fled.

CHAPTER VII

We took our disappointment in regard to the new-comer to Mr. Fraser, together with sundry threats as to what we would, or would not, do. Ernie was, of course, the chief speaker; the rest of us, like a Greek chorus, added particulars. Mr. Fraser did not preach to us or tell us we were exaggerating—as we were. He smiled kindly, patted Ernie's head, and said, "*Noblesse oblige*, my dears." The motto may be somewhat stilted and conceited; nevertheless, there is a good deal to be said for it. Eliza Jane, who knew little of heraldic mottoes, but much of the Golden Rule, had not joined in the grumbling, though she dutifully accompanied those who did. She had been cordial where the others had been coldly polite. "Of course, dears," she said, when we were talking things over, "it is no credit to me not to feel as you do about it, seeing I am one of the nobodies myself; but as Miss Bixby did not deceive—or, at least, mean to deceive—any one, I can't see that she is to blame. Then, you know, it is rather the rule, if one may judge from books, for geniuses to be plain-looking and to care nothing for dress; you remember Charlotte Brontë. And she must be so homesick, which always makes one seem awkward. Think of the testimonials she has—from Doctors of Divinity, too! She will show what she is presently; and meantime we will wait a little—won't we, dears?"

Several of us were older than Eliza Jane, but we never resented the "Won't we, dears?" with which she invariably wound up her pleadings. I think it was the unconscious maternal touch that won us. We waited—that was not a matter of choice with us—but for a while it seemed as if matters grew worse instead of better. On being asked about "the delightful island of Hawaii," Miss Bixby related how—a sea voyage having been ordered for a stomach trouble—the captain of a trading vessel, whose wife, a cousin of her own, was in the habit of accompanying him, had offered her passage. If it had been consumption—which, in those benighted days was looked upon as rather a romantic disease—we could have borne it. But a stomach trouble! Sallie Preston—who, as you may already have discovered, was the sentimental member of our group—looked so dejected, that Ernie laughed and whispered, "Cheer up, Sallie! It might have been fits."

In the end, however, Miss Bixby—to a limited extent—made her way. I think Armand, who had arrived for the winter shortly after she did, had a good deal to do with bringing about a more pleasant state of affairs. He was as courteous to her as Eliza Jane herself. And then, though it was not in Miss Bixby's power to present anything in a picturesque light, she had really seen a good deal of which we were glad to hear, and she was always ready to speak as long as we cared to listen. She had been on Robinson Crusoe's Island; and in reply to our inquiries about cannibals, it transpired that she had

conversed with King Kamehameha IV—not indeed a cannibal himself, but certainly the successor of cannibals. Then she had brought with her some mementoes of her voyage, the least valuable of which she shared with her pupils and their brothers. Armand, who was as skilful with his hands as if his beautiful ancestress had not lost her head for the sin of being an aristocrat, carved for each of us a souvenir from his share of whale's tooth and lava; and William Alexander Tompkins, who had the grateful spirit of his sister without her painful sense of propriety, shocked Eliza Jane by pronouncing Miss Bixby "not half a bad old fellow."

Miss Bixby, like so many of the teachers of her day and section, was stronger in United States History and mathematics than in anything else, and she astonished us by owning that if she had a hobby it was physiology. All this was a stumbling-block and rock of offense to the old Miss Randolphs and Mrs. de St. Cyr. The latter was as free with her opinions as if she had had half a dozen daughters under Miss Bixby's care, and she expounded them with all the volubility of her nation. Like Miss Pocahontas, she believed it should be as distinctly masculine to know algebra as to have a bass voice or a beard. Arithmetic she permitted to girls only as far as the Rule of Three, and she considered it improper for such of them as were "born" to do even addition very rapidly—a feat, in her opinion, only fit for charity-school children, who, she averred, were trained to add up with sickening rapidity on their red and chilblained fingers,

before putting down the sum total on a dirty slate. For once we applauded her; and Ernie, who hated mathematics as much as she loved *belles lettres*, waxed eloquent on the subject. "What I care to know," said she, "is how the great ones of the earth have fought and conquered, and what they have written, and sung, and painted, and carved, and builded; not what X equals or how many bones I have."

But it was not what Miss Bixby knew, but what she did not know, that troubled our sensible mothers. They thought much of "accomplishments," in that term including languages and music; but Miss Bixby's accomplishments, though vouched for—in perfect good faith, no doubt—by herself and the "Doctors of Divinity" of whom Eliza Jane thought so highly, left much to be desired. As for French, while she informed us with pride that she had been able to conjugate the verb *s'en aller*, negatively and interrogatively, at the tender age of nine, I doubt if to the end of her life she could have bought a beefsteak in that tongue. In Latin she was even more unfortunate than Armand, for while his quantities were all alike, hers were all wrong. More than once before, however, we had drawn on the boys' tutors for Latin, while we had chattered French with Mrs. de St. Cyr from our earliest years. Quite unaware of what we could do in that line, Miss Bixby made a rule that during a part of the day only French should be spoken, and had scarcely done so when she came flying before a playful calf, screaming, "Il me hookera!"

What really mattered was her deficiency in music. Her *repertoire*, we discovered, consisted of easy dance music and certain noisy "pieces," while her first song sent the Miss Randolphs scuttling out of the room, their fingers in their ears, and drew from Polly Coon the admiring exclamation, "My, tan't her holler!" Now, it happened that among her pupils there were several good voices and one really fine one. Ernie had a sweet contralto; Janie a very beautiful soprano, which gave promise of great things. What was to be done? Mrs. de St. Cyr, who, like the immortal Bottom, was ambitious of playing all parts, offered her services—to the consternation of all concerned. Her voice must always have been thin and shrill, and age had so cracked it, that her high notes were reached by a series of chirrupings so ludicrous that Ernie declared it would be more decorous if she would simply stop when she came to them and point up.

We were in a dilemma.

But providence was not going to desert the house of Washington Randolph. That was an autumn of violent floods; and Mr. Tompkins, riding over for the mail, one morning, found the bridge by which the stage should have proceeded carried away, the stage itself stalled in mud, and an irate passenger, in an astounding mix-up of three languages, invoking the curse of heaven on all concerned. The good Samaritan took the passengers home—there were but two of them, the man with the gift of tongues and his little boy. By the time they reached

shelter, Mr. Tompkins was in possession of their history; and after hearing it, he thought it worth while to communicate it to Madam.

Signor Faccio, it appeared, was well known in connection with Italian Opera in New York; not as a singer, but as a trainer of singers. He had married after coming to this country; and the death of his young wife, the previous summer, had made New York hateful to him. He was on his way to New Orleans, to which he had been recommended as a promising field—a roundabout way, for he had made a *détour* in order to visit a compatriot—when found by Mr. Tompkins. The latter gave it as his opinion that, being out of both health and spirits, he would be glad to stay among us for a time, and work in a quiet way.

Well, we were a little old-fashioned—perhaps a little narrow—among our mountains. Connected with the Italian Opera, Signor Faccio must, we knew, be such a teacher as nothing but the strangest chance could have brought to us; but—must he not also be wicked? Still, as Mr. Tompkins—who had already taken most kindly to the wanderer—suggested, there could be no harm in Madam seeing him. The pair came; Signor Faccio sang, and the little boy conquered. For the Italian had a charming voice—which Madam approved the more that it was not strong enough to permit him to go on the stage—and though his references proved to be all right, I really believe it was the little motherless Verdi (Guiseppe, of course) that won. I never saw

such a figure of woe. Signor Faccio himself was dressed fashionably, with only the customary external signs of his bereavement; but Verdi, as a mute, might have given hints to Oliver Twist's master, the undertaker. The father told us afterwards that he had designed the "*confection*" himself. The waist of the frock stopped under the little arms, while the skirt—a perfect bunch of fullness—reached to the ankles; the cape was like that of a watchman of the olden time; and, to crown all, a tasseled cap fitted down over the little black head like an extinguisher; and all of the very blackest black. When the extinguisher was removed, there was a little brown ball, very like a cocoanut, enlivened by the dearest little dark-skinned face, with rosy cheeks and bright black eyes. We were relieved to find that it was only Verdi's gala attire that was so dismal, and that except on high days and holidays he was dressed very much like any other child. While negotiations were going on, the Faccios remained at the Tompkinses'; and Eliza Jane, with her usual presence of mind, noticing the child tripping over the long skirt, took it off and ran a couple of tucks in it.

Well, Signor Faccio was engaged, but I have an idea that for some time after, he was closely watched as a possible dangerous character; a suspicion, I am bound to say, he did nothing to justify. He gave his lessons at the several houses in the presence of mothers or aunts or Miss Bixby, and he had rooms at Mrs. de St. Cyr's—there being a feeling that should possibilities be-

come actualities, the Frenchwoman was the person to cope with him. Mrs. de St. Cyr boasted of their musical evenings, having given him "the *entrée* to her *salon, tous les soirs*." And when we heard of him actually encoring his hostess's efforts, and even singing with her, we came to the conclusion that he possessed a sense of humor in a greater degree than his hostess. Happily for him and his little familiar, everybody gave him the "*entrée, tous les soirs*"; and as they were always begged to come to tea, they had not only a change of company, but what I suspect they valued quite as much, a change of diet. Full of gratitude for the fragrant coffee, the broiled chicken, the waffles, the beaten biscuits, the poundcake, the luscious preserves, and all the other delicious things that used to go to the making of a Virginia tea, the Signor would sing the evening through; and then, picking up the little Verdi from the sofa where, gorged and petted, he had fallen asleep, would wrap him up tenderly and carry him all the way home.

I am writing of our Italian as "the Signor," which was what we called him at first; but we had so long spoken of Armand's uncle simply as the "Seigneur" that, in spite of the shade of difference in the pronunciation, the advent of a Signor caused confusion; so, just as Madam de St. Cyr had become Mrs. de St. Cyr, the Signor became the Professor.

The Professor, we were not long in discovering, had faults of temper. And in one of his rages, the multitude

of words he poured forth was truly wonderful, while their polyglot character led to numerous misunderstandings. The old Miss Randolphs—who lived quite near, but always drove over in state on occasions of ceremony or faultfinding—came in the yellow chariot to say that whatever Madam decided about her own daughters, they intended to remove their other nieces from the music class at once, the Professor having called Virginia “one beast.” Madam was horrified beyond expression, the explanation not occurring to her till the Frenchwoman, who was present, threw herself into the breach. “*Pouf!* he was only trying to put *bête* into English. He did not mean to say one beast, but one stoopide.” But Virginia is not a stupid,” protested the aunts. “*Non?*” and Mrs. de St. Cyr shrugged her shoulders incredulously. “*Chères amies, tout le monde* thinks its own geese to be swans, but we shall be thought geese ourselves if we take away our children for a reason *si bête*.” Virginia was not withdrawn. In one respect the Professor was entirely unprincipled. He would let days pass without giving a lesson to the stupid ones, while he would double and treble the time devoted to the others. And poor Virgie declared that the scornful way he looked at her, when he did vouchsafe to teach her, was worse than being called all the beasts in a circus.

With equanimity worthy of Eliza Jane, Miss Bixby saw transferred to the Professor a goodly portion of the duties for which she had been engaged. She showed neither relief nor resentment. Madam, with her habitual

courtesy, explained to her the rare opportunity afforded by the Italian, without so much as hinting at her shortcomings; and her acquiescence was expressed amiably if not elegantly. "All right!" said she. The change lightened her work without reducing her salary; but, as we quite understood, she might have been "huffy" about it, and we were grateful to her that she was not.

We had jumped to the conclusion that our two instructors would not get on together—would, perhaps, be open enemies; and this simply because they were such entire contrasts. Greater contrasts, indeed, one could not well conceive. The Professor, some of us—accustomed to tall fathers and brothers—thought, might have been a little taller. But his figure was good; his face, with its clear olive skin, well-cut features and fine dark eyes, was handsome; and his wardrobe that of a man of taste as well as of fashion. Miss Bixby I have already described. It may have been that the very contrast attracted; or perhaps the same feeling that prompted the duets with Mrs. de St. Cyr led to the cultivation of Miss Bixby. In their early meetings, he used to look her over from head to foot—not impertinently, but with the same kind of child-like interest that Verdi might have shown towards a curious animal; and more than once, after a protracted confabulation with her, he exclaimed ingenuously, "*Madre di dio*, but I lofe *la bisarre!* It makes to laugh, it helps to forget." Miss Bixby, who looked on the book of mankind very much as she looked on those containing the verb *s'en*

aller and all the rest of it, took the Professor seriously, and set herself to learn from him whatever she could. In a short time, he was giving her Italian lessons and she—after consulting Madam as to the propriety of the thing—was darning his socks, and trying to convert him. Miss Bixby was one of those old-fashioned persons who sincerely believe the pope to be anti-Christ, and convents institutions founded for no other purpose than the perpetration of deeds of darkness. I have referred to her lack of imagination; but in regard to the Roman Catholic Church in that respect I have done her less than justice. "Things seen are mightier than things heard," the biographer of poor Enoch Arden tells us, but he had never heard Miss Bixby describe the Inquisition. Her most terrible tale—to which we were indebted for more than one nightmare—we found afterwards in the pages of Mrs. Sherwood. Professor Faccio—who, though nominally a Catholic, was really a pagan—was not at all averse to being the object of the good woman's solicitude, and was converted with almost every moon. "*Moi, je suis Huguenot, aujourd'hui,*" he would say smilingly to Mrs. de St. Cyr. And the old cynic, from whose blood the Huguenot strain seemed to have died out, would laugh with him.

The Professor's temper being what it was, the pair did not always agree. The Italian disliked the doctrine of social equality as much as we did, while Miss Bixby regarded it as the corner-stone of the republic. "H-m, what a contree!" the Professor would scream. "A man

ees to-day one what-you-call-him: sleeves torned up, hammer boom-boom, one dorty man. To-morrow——" here he gave an ironical snarl—"lawyer, *s'il vous plaît*, doctor, *gentilhomme*. Ah, I no lofe thees contree!" These animadversions were generally poured forth at the close of the Italian lesson when his vain efforts to instill some sweetness into Miss Bixby's vowels had goaded him to madness. Her version of the

*"Lingua Toscana
In bocca Romana,"*

would be

*"Linguae Toscanny
In boccy Romanny."*

Whereupon the Professor, who, I verily believe, had learned the word *yankee* for no other reason than to taunt her with it, would thunder out,

*"Lingua Toscâ-â-nâ
In bocca Yankâ-â-nâ."*


Miss Bixby, however, went calmly on, and before long—but always with her own vowels—read what she called "Danty."

And the Professor, who had been in the habit of referring to her as the "Yankee Mees," now, when unusually good-natured, addressed her as "Signorina Yankana."

CHAPTER VIII

To Mammy Sarah, the admission of Polly Coon, the little plebeian, to patrician privileges was bitter indeed. Eliza Jane she had grown to like. The English girl's humility and self-forgetfulness had won her completely. But Polly Coon she longed to lay hands upon. "Hit gibs me a mis'ry hyah," said she to Uncle Ab, laying her hands upon the folds of fat under which her heart was supposed to be, "to see dat trash gittin' her larnin' wif de Wash'n't'n Rando'phs."

If anything in the world could have reconciled her to the situation, it was that the child was a thorn in the flesh of Miss Bixby. To us the worst of Polly was that she never knew—or if she knew never cared—that there were times when her room was better than her company. In school she was an agreeable distraction; out of school we wanted none of her. But she, having in this particular the good taste of her betters, had attached herself to Ernie and followed her like a dog. Scolding had less effect on her than it would have had on a dog; she did not even hang her head. If we told her to go home, she would not go; if we took her there, she would not stay. With perseverance worthy of a better cause, her stout little legs would cover the distance between mill and mansion-house, and with the cunning of an Indian she would stalk us into the deepest recesses of the wood, there lying in ambush if she dared not appear openly.

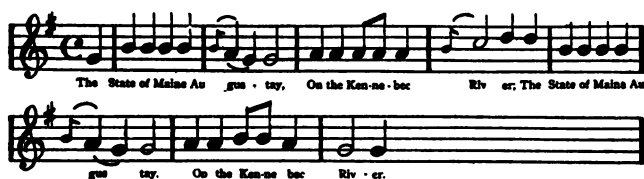


Once, she fell out of a tree into Rosamond Preston's lap; another time, she was shot at—though fortunately not shot—by Harry Randolph, who, hearing a noise in the bushes, supposed her to be game. And even more objectionable than herself was her familiar—an immense superannuated gander, that followed her as faithfully as she followed us, and whose hissing, more than once, when the pair lay concealed, caused an alarm of rattlesnakes and a stampede.

The most provoking part of it was that Polly's father, far from helping us, seemed to admire her doings. "Well, I declar' to gracious," he would say in answer to our complaints, "she do love you, Miss Ernie; she do love you *shore*." We gave up Polly at last, like an unanswerable conundrum. A word to Madam Washington Randolph—the only person on earth the child feared—would have brought about effectual banishment; but that word was never spoken. Even Sallie Preston, though she declared the Tryst "desecrated" by Polly's breakdowns and Peter the gander's squawks, would not complain to Madam. So we let the imp come and go as she would, getting what fun we could out of her.

In the meantime, we were discovering that in giving up the music to Signor Faccio, Miss Bixby had made a reservation. It was early in December when she announced the surprise in store for our respective families. On the place of honor on the schoolroom wall she kept in perpetuity a map of the United States; and beneath this map she now hung a small blackboard ruled for

music, on which she had put down certain notes and words. Then, taking up her position beside this, she raised her pointer to the State of Maine, and (the pronunciation is hers) thus sang:



The tune, you will perceive, could scarcely have puzzled us by its complexity, but we were too bewildered to join. In our pursuit of learning, so far, the fine arts and the sciences had been kept severely apart. The whole proceeding was so strange to us that we almost suspected a joke—or would have done so had it not been difficult to think of Miss Bixby as joking anywhere, and impossible to think of her as joking in the schoolroom. Eliza Jane with her customary politely-pleased expression made the solo a duet, and a moment later it was a full chorus.

To those educated in the public schools of that day (in which, Miss Bixby informed us, even the most matter-of-fact of all the sciences was sometimes set to music—the Multiplication Table in certain country districts being sung to the tune of *Yankee Doodle*) there may seem nothing odd in the performance. But public schools were at that date unknown in the South, and at first we were puzzled even more than amused. We

felt, I think, as players accustomed to the legitimate drama might feel if suddenly called upon to take part in a farce. We were not slow to perceive, however, that a farce, if less dignified than the legitimate drama, may be infinitely more entertaining; and our summing up was that musical geography might be—to use the word the Miss Randolphs always applied to Miss Bixby—“common-schooly,” but was certainly great fun. And assuredly, even had the capitals then been as numerous as they are now, there would have been no danger of any one who had practiced Miss Bixby’s method ever forgetting one of them.

I have forgotten whether the proposition to keep the pleasure in store for our elders a secret from them originated with Miss Bixby or with us. It was agreed, at any rate, that nothing should be said of it outside the schoolroom, and that it should be the finale of a grand performance to be given on the last night of the year. This secret lent zest to the practising, which took place at the close of every afternoon. By that time Miss Bixby, chiefly from tussles with Polly Coon, in which the cause of righteousness rarely triumphed till it had been allied with brute force, looked somewhat the worse for wear, especially as to her *coiffure*. While the struggle was in progress, there was a lock of hair that used to detach itself from the knot behind, rise erect to the height of several inches, and then droop gracefully to one side. When the singing began, it nodded time to every motion of its owner’s head, and so acted as a kind

of *métronome*. As Miss Bixby took her place, there came over her face, no matter how tired she might be, an expression it never wore at any other time. The musical geography was her *chef d'oeuvre*, and the look meant pride, blended with a virtuous determination to be humble. This expression was enhanced by an extraordinary dilation and contraction of the nostrils, also in time to the singing. By the time Miss Bixby had led us through the New England States, she had entirely lost the key with which she set out; but at the next section she soared bravely up to it again:



For the capitals that were not on rivers there was another tune:



varied when there were two to a State to



We also touched, here and there, on the condition of more benighted portions of the globe; for example:



and we wound up with:



This passage, owing to the *fortissimo* beginning and the *diminuendo* continuation of the penultimate word, together with a prolonged pause after it and a sudden *pianissimo* drop to "dates," was the crowning glory of the whole. We nearly betrayed our secret practising it. The key of G is not a dismal one, and there was certainly nothing in the words to induce sadness; yet Miss Bixby managed to give a minor effect to the whole, and rendered the Beled-el-Jered passage with a wail worthy of a Banshee; and it was a delight to us to imitate and even outdo her. Some of us thought it a pity that it should end with anything so commonplace as the name of a fruit to which in its exported condition Polly Coon was intemperately addicted. We took our good Mr. Fraser into our confidence, luring him into the woods and there rehearsing for him. We had never heard him laugh so heartily as he did when we had finished. "Don't you think, Cousin Fraser," asked Sallie Preston,

"that some more poetical word would be better to finish with?" "No indeed, my dear," said Mr. Preston, "it is more oriental as it is. It is like 'In the name of the prophet, figs!'"

As the day when the secret was no longer to be a secret drew nigh, the question that exercised us most was, "What will Professor Faccio say?" He would be present, of course—Madam would take care of that—and we thought it probable that he would fly into one of his rages because "the Yankee Mees" interfered with the voices. In any case, he would be sure to mock at the whole thing. These misgivings were not mentioned to Miss Bixby, who had none herself.

The fateful evening came. It happened that in the course of it, the Professor was called out, and when the singing began, he had not returned. We were therefore free to concentrate our anxiety upon our own people. The gentlemen smiled, the boys grinned, Armand looked pleased and interested. But the fate of musical geography did not depend upon the gentlemen and the boys, and the ladies looked cold and critical. At the close there was a silence in which Sallie Preston requested me to hear her heart beat.

And then, "Brava! brava!" "Encore! encore! encore!" came in a voice we knew well—the voice of the dreaded Professor. Armand joined in the cry and the hand-clapping, the gentlemen followed suit, the ladies relented. The whole had to be repeated twice, and we had three

separate ovations. The dreaded Professor had saved the situation. Never, never would we forget it.

Not till the next day did Madam mention what had so sorely distressed her—our sins against the Queen's English. Eliza Jane was present, and she thanked Madam with tears in her eyes, and exacted from each of us a promise that we would help her to conquer her cockneyisms. It was odd that after the years she had been with us, though she but rarely fell into them in conversation, she still reverted to them whenever she sang.

And, it appeared, we had not only reproduced Miss Bixby's "Noo York," "Borston," etc., but had capped the climax with Eliza Jane's special weakness:

"Beled-el-Jered, the land of *dytes*."

CHAPTER IX

I mentioned Madam's advice in regard to the Queen's English in the last chapter, though it was not given till New Year's Day, because it was the finale, so to speak, of our performance; but I must recur to New Year's Eve, to relate what happened to Miss Bixby. Those who can remember so far back, and who were living in the Slave States at that time, will not have forgotten what an unrestful period, full of vague alarms, came between John Brown's attempt and the breaking out of the Civil War. In our section, especially at the close of the year, there were rumors of houses—chiefly those on outlying farms—being entered by night; these robberies supposed by alarmists to be but the prelude to more dreadful things. Madam entirely discredited the sensational tales; Miss Bixby believed them with all her heart.

It has always been matter of surprise to Southerners that the love of their Northern brethren for the race of Ham should be so strong in the abstract and so weak in the concrete. Miss Bixby, for instance, whose theory it was that our colored people were in all respects—save in their lack of education—her equals, could not conceal her horror when she saw the young Washington Randolphs laying their fair young faces against Mammy Sarah's black one. The devotion that had earned for the old nurse such favors she could appreciate, but she would have rewarded it with emancipation—compulsory,

if necessary—instead of caresses. And her patrons and pupils were alike amused and indignant when they discovered that ever since hearing of the thefts she had been in nightly fear of a “servile insurrection,” and that the horrors of the latter now outranked in her mind those of the Inquisition.

She took her measures accordingly. She had already a catch and a lock on her bedroom door; to these she now added an imposingly large bolt and an article of which she had brought a large packet from the North. To a tack on the door she hooked one side of the apparatus, and to another tack on the door-frame she hooked the other; between them being suspended something like a child’s torpedo, which I have no doubt it was. The idea was that when the catch, the lock, and the bolt had all succumbed to the “jimmy” (she had evidently studied the burglar’s vocabulary), the ridiculous little thing would pop—she used the more impressive word explode. The intention, I gathered, was not to keep the burglar out, but to give notice that he was in and that it was time to get up and grapple with him. For my part, things having come to that pass, I should prefer not to know it, but to be burgled or murdered in peace.

On this fateful last night of the year, Miss Bixby awoke in the small hours with the feeling that there was—what many of our sex nightly look for, and happily most of us in vain—“a man under the bed!”

She distinctly heard breathing—regular breathing, as if the performer might be in a comfortable sleep.

What was to be done? She had once made us an address on the subject of presence of mind in emergencies, such as taking poison accidentally, severing an artery, swallowing a fishbone, getting a pea in the ear or nose, or bursting off a critically-situated button. And to each of these anecdotes she had appended an anecdote; for, as she justly observed, a bare enumeration of directions might be at once forgotten, whereas, wrought into a story, they would be serviceable after any number of years. To prove the truth of this theory, there flashed into her mind all she had read or heard of persons in similar distressing circumstances. In the case most nearly in point, the thing under the bed turned out to be a maniac, and the person in it showed her presence of mind by slipping out at one side of the bed as the maniac got in on the other. Miss Bixby determined to do likewise, but time wearing on without the maniac taking the initiative, she decided to take it herself.

Getting softly out of bed, she crept to the door, drew back the bolt, turned the key and catch, but had almost undone herself in the shock of discovering that the explosive was still intact on the door. She had barely strength to totter out into the passage, and insert and turn the key in the other side. Then, with a yell that would have done honor to our Harry, she flew into what she thought was Ernie's room, and took a flying leap into the bed—thus playing the maniac's part as well as her

own. But in her fright she had made a slight mistake as to her whereabouts; and I really should not have liked to be Miss Bixby when Madam, extricating herself with difficulty from under her, sat up and looked at her.

In a few minutes, however, the house was ready for action. Questioned by Madam, the governess related how she had found fastenings and torpedo intact, showing that the maniac must have been there when she entered it. "Maniac, indeed!" said Madam, in high disapproval; "it is doubtless old Ponto."

"Sho 'nuff," put in Uncle Ab, "it's des' ole Ponto," but he was white with fear and could scarcely get the words out. In vain Mammy Sarah thrust a poker into his hand and commanded him to advance. Had the old negro seen a gun pointed at Madam or one of her daughters, he would unhesitatingly have thrust himself between; but the mystery of this unseen thing under the bed and Miss Bixby's talk of the maniac had upset him. Quietly putting the pair aside, Madam unlocked the door, and with a daughter on each side of her and the entire household brigade looking on, advanced to the bed, lifted the valance, and drew out, rolled up in a ball, something soft and warm, partly covered by a tangle of golden hair. Polly Coon, if you please!

It was all very simple. Debarred by her misconduct—such as piping that the capital of the State of Maine was "Disgusty," and crooking her little finger up against her head and "wagglings" it in time to Miss Bixby's stray lock—from all the later rehearsals, and, of course, from

the performance itself, she had determined on two things: first, that she would be present as a spectator if not as a performer (there would certainly be some coign of vantage from which she could see without being seen); and, secondly, that she would revenge herself upon Miss Bixby. She had been at Washington Place in the afternoon, and on being sent home at dusk had simply slipped round the house and back again by another entrance, intending to secrete herself somewhere till the singing should begin. She had just reached the upper hall when she beheld the dreaded Madam in the distance, and entering the nearest room she had crawled under the bed and, falling fast asleep, was oblivious to everything till she found herself in Madam's arms. Then she was alarmed indeed.

"Lordy me!" exclaimed Mammy Sarah, on recognizing the imp, "if that chile don't deserve the bestest whuppin' that evah wuz! Her paw wuz oveh while Miss Bixby's jogaphy lessons was gwine on" (here Mammy sniffed), "an' wuz half crazy when he foun' she wa'n't hyah. I done tol' him she wa'n't hyah an' she wa'n't *wanted hyah*."

"She ought indeed to have a sound whipping," said Miss Bixby viciously, not thinking of Mr. Coon's wrongs, but of her own.

"The middle of the night is no time for whippings," said Madam, "and the child has been punished enough. Give her some warm milk, Mammy, and put her in bed, and let Sam go to the mill and let them know she is here."

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So it was settled. And if Polly Coon had only known it, she had had her revenge. But she did not know it, and, moreover, she had been awake enough to hear what had been said about the sound whipping—another crime on Miss Bixby's part. Of Mammy Sarah she had a wholesome fear, but of Miss Bixby none whatever.

So without a word to any one she laid her plans; and on the principle of "The better day, the better deed," the first Sunday after the holidays was chosen for carrying them out. In the schoolroom—where we had our Sunday as well as our week-day lessons—Miss Bixby had caused to be erected for herself a platform, and on this, on the Sunday in question, we observed on entering a large red-and-green carpetbag. The instruction was from the Prayer-Book and Church Catechism; but Miss Bixby, who was not of our faith, had requested permission to pray extempore; and being of the strictest sect of those who pray extempore, she did so with her eyes shut and required that we should shut ours. But scarcely had she begun on this occasion, when Nannie Randolph, nudging the girl nearest her, pointed to the stage, at which she was gazing with dilated eyes. A portent indeed! The carpetbag was moving—actually moving—from the wall against which it had been placed, in the direction of Miss Bixby. The nudge passed from girl to girl, till eight pairs of eyes were almost jumping out of their sockets—Polly Coon's, strange to say, remained devoutly glued; an abnormal state of affairs which, had we been less preoccupied, might have brought enlighten-

ment. The wonder grew. The bag rolled over and over, then gaped wide, and with a screech echoed by us all, and by none more effectively than the victim, something flew out of it, fixed itself between Miss Bixby's shoulders, and began thrashing her with wings that were fortunately too decrepit to do serious damage. We appreciated New England nerve when we saw how quickly our governess recovered herself. Assisted by Eliza Jane, she got Peter out of the door, threw the carpetbag after him, and arrested the culprit, who was in the act of following. Her coolness alarmed Polly, and she became abject. "What tempted you, Polly Coon, to do such a deed," demanded Miss Bixby, "and of all days in the week on the Sabbath?" The question was purely rhetorical, the questioner no more expecting an answer than if she had asked, "Can'st thou draw out leviathan with a hook?" But Polly, anxious to propitiate, had her answer ready. "The devil ma'am," said she. We left Miss Bixby to deal with her, and had reason to think the orthodox excuse had not availed. At least, if it was the devil who got the whipping, his screams might easily have been mistaken for those of Polly Coon.

But the cup of Polly Coon's iniquity was not yet full. For some time past, I should explain, fate had put us at her mercy. One January day, when it was as warm as in September and the English primroses were still blooming in our gardens, we were at the Tryst; and an old crone, whom some of us had previously bribed and primed, came along and begged the privilege of telling

Ernie's fortune. Of course she was to be a princess, and of course the stripling prince was Armand in every particular. We had got into a habit of speaking of Armand among ourselves as "the young Seigneur," and the title taking Polly's fancy, she had ever since called him by it. On this January day, when we had finished the prince and princess nonsense, a voice piped from overhead, "*I knows who the prince is; it's the young Snoor. And now, if you-all does anyfing I doesn't like, I'll tell!*" The "*I'll tell*" became a perfect terror to us; and sometimes, if Armand were near, she would add to its effect by screaming, "*Here, Snoor! here!*" as if she were calling to a dog.

But she was at last hoist with her own petard. Ernie had gone over to Mrs. de St. Cyr's on some errand for Madam, and Armand as a matter of course walked home with her. They were still in the woods when Polly, who had been stalking them, stole up to Armand, and, giving him a confidential wink, said in a loud whisper, "*If you wants to kiss her, Young Snoor, I won't never tell; indeed and double I won't.*" Ernie was furious. Glancing involuntarily at Armand, she saw the indignant blood—indignant for her sake—rushing to his cheeks; but she also saw, or fancied she saw, for one swift moment, desire kindling in his eyes. Flying at Polly, she whisked her off like a flash, Armand not daring to follow. When they drew near Washington Place, she called a halt, sat down on a stump, and, bouncing the culprit in front of her, said, "*Now, you vulgar little beast, take*

your choice: either I shall let Madam know what you have done and have you forbidden the Place forever, or you will take the very best whipping Mammy Sarah can give you." The child's look of hurt surprise, of virtuous sorrow, and the mist in her heavenly blue eyes, might have melted a heart of stone. But Ernie knew her Polly. "Is you in earnest?" sighed Polly. "That I am!" snapped Rhadamanthus. "Then I raver have the whippin'," said Polly, sure that Ernie would relent. There was no relenting; the victim was handed over, with a curt statement of what was wanted. And no sooner was she alone with the executioner than she began to ply her arts upon her. "We has a nice switch at home," she said in her most obliging manner; "I could run an' get it for you." Mammy laughed. "Don' you trouble yo'sef," said she; "I keeps my switch about me." And she displayed a plump and powerful palm. Then fright in good earnest seized Polly. "Oh!" she cried, as Mammy was getting her into position. "Forgive me this time, an' I never, never will tell the Young Snoor to kiss Miss Ernie again. No," she shrieked, as Mammy paused to hear, "even if the other chil'n tell me to tell him, I'll say, 'No; Madam's good, kind Mammy Sarah made me promise not to tell him, an' I tan't tell a lie.'" "H-m," said Mammy, "so *dat's* what yo've been up to. Much obleeged to yo' foh tellin' on yo'sef. Now yo' gwine to catch it!" And Polly did.

As for Ernie, she did not visit on Armand's head Polly's iniquity, as she would have done in earlier days.

It occurred to her that any special coldness would be too much in the way of a reminder. But from that day in the woods, the unconscious charm of the boy-and-girl intimacy was over. Armand more than ever indulged in long solitary walks, and Ernie took to long silences and occasional, and seemingly uncalled-for, fits of blushing. An old writer tells us that there is a world within us and a world without us that exactly correspond. Was Ernie, in recalling that glance of Armand's, conscious of something in her own heart of like desire? It was as if these two young people had eaten of the Tree of Knowledge—Polly Coon being the Serpent that had shown the glowing fruit.

Polly still kept an eye on them, but with the other on Mammy Sarah. For Mammy had wound up her chastisement with an admonition which Polly, though roaring lustily at the moment, had heard. "Now, yo' betteh watch out, chile! Foh whuppin's is lak brakin's. Dey bof goes by frees."

CHAPTER X

It is all very well for boys to boast of their "thrashings," but girls, in my opinion, ought to treat their personal experiences in that line with reserve. There was no reserve about Polly Coon. And as she confided the story of her crime as well as her punishment to one of the younger Prestons, we were very soon all aware of what had taken place.

Of course the Washington Randolphs and their intimates had not reached the age of sixteen and seventeen without thinking of love and marriage. In those days, the rôle of wife and mother was not weighed in the balance with one of the professions. We had heard indeed of the heresy of Woman's Rights, just as we had heard of Mormonism. Nowadays, when we read of "Equal Suffrage" meetings, we read also of well-gowned suffragettes; at that time, we associated Woman's Rights with the Bloomer costume. And the only member of our circle who had had personal experience with either was Miss Pocahontas, who considered herself an authority, because she had once when in New York seen a woman—"a bold huzzy," she called her—"marching down Broadway, as bold as a lion," in the objectionable array. The modern lures to independent careers were not. The Female Seminary and the fashionable city boarding-school gave no hint of the girls' colleges, much less of the "co-eds" that were to be; and had any young woman,

either alone or with a companion of her own age, set up for herself in studio or apartment, she would have been promptly set down as no better than she should be. And no euphuism took away the reproach of the husbandless; an unmarried woman was not a bachelor-girl, but an old maid.

We had no intention of being old maids. What girl of sixteen, who is neither prude nor angel, has? We had long outgrown a certain childish amusement we had had, that of selecting professions for our sons and names for our children of both sexes—I remember Sallie Preston going so far as to arrange an alliance between her son and Ernie's daughter. But we still talked when the spirit moved us of love and marriage, as experiences that would come as naturally to us as our next day's dinner. And we did not talk stealthily or with self-conscious giggles, but openly and frankly—as much so in the hearing of our elders as among ourselves. Dear girls of to-day, I know you are much better up in Ernie's bugbears—X and the number and nature of the bones you have—than we were, but I hope you will forgive me when I say that in some things I think the girls of our generation had a finer instinct than those of yours.

As was natural when we saw so few strangers, and our friends' brothers were so like our own, we thought of husbands only in the abstract—with one exception, that of the boy who was brother to none of us. Armand—tall for his age, handsome, gentle and brave, and in our imaginations clothed in the romance of the far lands

from which he had come and the tragic doings with which his ancestors were connected—was surely predestined for Ernie. Here, far more than in regard to all other questions, the important point was, "What does Ernie think?" but it not being a question it would be safe to put to her, we discussed it a good deal among ourselves. On the one hand, they had quarreled more with each other—or rather Ernie had quarreled more with Armand—than with any one else, but we comforted ourselves with the homely saying about a bad beginning making a good ending. We would have congratulated ourselves on our wisdom had we known that Mr. Fraser, finding Armand on one occasion in specially downcast mood over Ernie's snubbings, had quoted Heine to the same effect:

"A man should murmur never,
If treated worse than dog or cat,
Till doted on forever."

Our confabulations never reached any more definite conclusion than that time would tell. Certainly the time was coming that was to reveal hearts and try men's souls.

It was, as I have said, the year of grace eighteen hundred and sixty that was sung out at Washington Place. Elsewhere there were less harmonious doings; doings over which we juniors were growing so excited that we would willingly have spent our time in talking of them—giving lessons the go-by—had not our elders wisely kept us to the business in hand. The year previous had

witnessed the attempt of John Brown, and even when we were singing of South Carolina as a part of the Union it had already seceded. This is neither a history nor a romance of the war, but the simple memories of one who with her companions was in those stirring times of the most impressionable age, and whose chief pleasure, now that she is old, is in recollection. But one word as a Virginian I must say. I have been informed frequently of late years, and even more frequently have seen the statement in print, that Virginia was opposed to Secession, and was coerced into it against her better judgment by South Carolina. I can only say that not only have I never heard such an opinion from any Virginian of the Confederacy, but that I have never known any such Virginian who would not hear it with a smile—it not being worth a frown. What! the Old Dominion, the Mother of Presidents, coerced? Is there one of us who can recall a single word from father or brother, husband or friend, to justify such an assertion? We acted with less haste, less passion, than some of our sister States; but the right, as we saw it, once settled, our boys, mad with the joy of battle that in those days seemed to be in every Southerner's blood, rushed to the fray as gallantly as did Mr. Fraser's heroes of "the fifteen" and "the forty-five"; and with them there was no wizard to stand in the way with prophecies of disaster and death—nor, had there been, would they, any more than gallant Cameron, have heeded him. In the spring of the new year our legislature passed the Ordinance of Secession.

And, as all the world knows, it was Virginia that proposed the Confederacy and the Constitution, and her chief city that offered itself as a shining mark to the enemy by becoming the seat of government. And, most glorious of all, it was Virginia that gave to the cause the cavalier Lee and the puritan Jackson.

The day that brought us the news of our first triumph began with a comedy—the episode of Rose-Marie. Between this cow, a granddaughter of the conforming animal, and her mistress there seemed to exist as warm a friendship as that between the Cranford cow and the Misses Barker. And not one of us laughed when Mrs. de St. Cyr appeared in hot haste that morning, waving what looked like a mammoth switch of gray hair, and with many gesticulations told her story. Madam Washington Randolph must remember what a beautiful, what a superb tail Rose-Marie had; a tail whose silver gray set off the brilliant red of her body, a tail that for length and bushiness had not its peer in the State, a tail that would have swept the ground like the court-train of a *grande dame* only that its owner had too fine a sense of propriety to permit it. "*Eh bien, voila!*"—and Mrs. de St. Cyr held up the article, which indeed almost justified her eulogium; while a thrill of horror ran through the beholders as they saw what it was and rushed to the conclusion that it was all that was left of Rose-Marie. But things were not quite so bad. Richt, Mrs. de St. Cyr went on to say, was ill, and Pete from the Other Randolphs' had been milking for her, and the

night before, that *scélérat*, instead of turning her into the pasture, had tied her to a tree, to save himself the trouble of going after her in the morning. Rose-Marie, unaccustomed to such treatment, had spent the night in trying to regain her liberty, and in the effort had wound the rope and tail around the tree, so that when at last the rope broke, the tail still held her. Then, maddened with fright, the cow had made a break for liberty, leaving, like Tom O'Shanter's Meg, her tail behind. The Frenchwoman had presumably been in bed and asleep when the catastrophe occurred, but she told it with all the fire of an eye-witness.

Madam was full of sympathy. The juniors gathered around the tail. Polly Coon asked if she might have it.

But Mrs. de St. Cyr had not come for sympathy only. She was a more inventive genius than Tam O'Shanter, and then she had the tail in possession.

So she raised her voice again. "It makes warm already. Soon the great flies shall bite. With no tail to keep them off, the milk of Rose-Marie shall dwindle. This is what I go to do, my good Madame. You shall lend me your Uncle Ab; he shall join the parts with tar which is even now heating; and we shall also tie the parts with string."

Madam was more than willing to lend Uncle Ab, but she expressed her fear that the tail would not grow.

"Not grow? That I know not, but it shall wave. It shall chase the great flies, and I shall have the cream—and the butter."

Here Uncle Ab, whose countenance had visibly fallen on hearing the part assigned to him, put in a word. "Mighty resky business, ole Mis', dis tacklin' a raw stomp. Rose-M'rie ain't nebbeh been de bestest dispositionest cow in de worl', an' now she'll be hookin' mad."

"Pouf!" said the Frenchwoman. "Rose-Marie has the temper of an angel. Is she not *bonne Chretienne, Méthodiste comme vous?*" And waving farewell to Madam with the tail, she turned homeward, followed by the reluctant Uncle Ab, and, as it chanced to be a holiday, by all the young people.

The unfortunate Rose-Marie, tied again to the fatal tree, was pawing the ground, and tossing her head, and bellowing—much more like a performer in a Spanish bull-fight than a peaceful domestic animal. The hot tar was brought out. "Now, Uncle Ab," said Mrs. de St. Cyr, "since you have so much of fear, I myself shall mend the tail, and you shall stand at the head and hold her."

Uncle Ab moved slowly to the front, and looked dubiously at the horns—long, symmetrical, sharp. "Please, ma'am, ole Mis'," said he, hastily, "I ain't one mite skeered, but—I finks I does betteh at de odeh en'."

But Mrs. de St. Cyr was already dealing with the other end. And as the boiling tar touched the raw flesh, Rose-Marie gave an unearthly roar, knocked the old man down, and, the rope being of some length, charged wildly in every direction. The spectators were on the

henhouse in the twinkling of an eye; and Uncle Ab, up again in an instant, was behind Mrs. de St. Cyr—moving as she moved, steadily keeping her figure between himself and the cow, and finally making a rush for shelter to a neighboring tree, from which all the Frenchwoman's adjurations could not dislodge him. Mrs. de St. Cyr began to lose heart and, incidentally, to say sharp things about the absence of her grandson who had spent the night with Harry Randolph.

"Houp-la!" A lithe figure is taking a near fence; Signor Faccio to the rescue! Not Apollo, nor Perseus, nor Siegfried, nor St. George, ever brought to the conquest of their respective dragons such action and such war-cries as our knight-errant to the replacing of that cow's tail. We laughed till we cried, laughed till we fell off the henhouse in a body. But the deed was actually done. Before we went home we saw the tail tarred, tied, and waved.

But, lest I should raise false hopes in the breast of any owner of a tailless cow, let me add that Mrs. de St. Cyr's success was but temporary. Next day, the tail hung at right angles to the stump; the day after, it was missing. "Rose-Marie's tail is lost again," was a bit of news that came to us oftener and oftener. At first, the recovery of the tail gave the Frenchwoman an object in her walks, but her enthusiasm died out at last. The cow had become restive under constant treatment—her temper spoiled, so her mistress said, by the shock to her system. So the "good Christian" was made into beef.

We were in the act of descending from the henhouse when Armand and Harry Preston came galloping up. "Hurra! hurra!" cried our Hotspur, "We've taken Fort Sumter. Hurra! hurra!" You should have heard how, after a moment of impressive silence in which we took the news in, we echoed his triumph. He was off again, almost before we could ask a question, but he had given us something to shout for, and we did shout—that day and for days to come.

The decease of Rose-Marie was shortly followed by that of Polly Coon's old friend and our old enemy, the gander Peter; a tragedy that led to Polly's instantaneous conversion to the other side. Her delight had been to sit on her father's gate and make faces at the soldiers in blue; now she suddenly discovered that her worst foes were those of her own household. A score or more of our men—rough, uncouth rustics from another State—appeared at the mill, one day, and after being treated with lavish hospitality repaid the kindness by confiscating the venerable bird for a "gander-pulling." You have doubtless never heard of this barbarous diversion. Neither had we till poor Peter met his fate. The unfortunate victim—generally chosen for the length of his neck, and Peter's was temptingly long—is hung, head downwards, high out of reach; and the contestants, riding single-file, spring out of the saddle as they pass under him, and try to grasp his neck—the bird becoming the property of him in whose hand the head remains. While the deed was in the doing, Polly wept and im-

plored; when it was done, she dried her tears and thought of revenge. "I'm a Yank! I'm a Yank! I'm a Yank!" she screamed, facing the men with her small fists doubled. "An' when my paw comes home, I'll make him start right off after you, an' cut off the last one of you-all's heads." Though she failed to convert her father to her new principles, she stuck to them bravely herself. Not even her beloved Ernie could bring her back to the side that had done to death Peter. And I think we must allow there were older people who changed sides for worse reasons.

CHAPTER XI

We were soon almost a community of women and children. Mr. Preston and his elder sons, Peyton Randolph and his, the jolly miller, and in short all who could bear arms except such as were necessary for our safety or sustenance, had gone. And now, their families, going back upon the path of the first migration, were to return to the Valley, not to be quite cut off from those who were fighting for them.

Before this exodus, however, the strangers within our gates took their departure. It needed not the breaking up of Madam's establishment to send Miss Bixby home; for her the hour of "servile insurrection" had struck, and nothing could have kept her. But previous to her going, she was again to have her matter-of-fact life touched by adventure, and adventure of such a kind as to outdo in the opinion of her pupils those connected with southern seas and cannibal islands. Miss Bixby had two proposals of marriage!

We had taken for granted that Signor Faccio would return to the North, perhaps even to his native land. But it soon transpired that the gallant spirit that had led him to the aid of Mrs. de St. Cyr in the matter of Rose-Marie was capable of rising to more knightly enterprise. His intention was heralded by Mrs. de St. Cyr, whom we saw approaching rapidly up the avenue, one afternoon, waving her crutched stick as formerly she had

waved the cow's tail. It was some time before she could speak, she had hurried so; and that this inability was maddening to her, because she feared some one else would forestall her, we gathered from her desperate efforts to recover her voice, and her nervous glances out of window.

That same fear led her to blurt out her news all at once, instead of artistically—and maliciously—leading up to it, as she was in the habit of doing whenever there was a bit of scandal to retail.

"Ah, Madame," she gasped, "that so bold huzzee goes to marry herself with the Signor."

You may remember that Miss Pocahontas, disregarding for once, *les convenances*, had applied this opprobrious term to the woman in Bloomer costume she had once seen. It had commended itself to Mrs. de St. Cyr, and she had used it more than once, though not before in Madam's hearing.

Madam had no idea to whom the Frenchwoman referred, but by this time the latter was able to tell her tale at length. She had been strolling in the wood near her house, it appeared, when she happened to see Miss Bixby in front of her joined by Signor Faccio. She walked on behind them, intending to join them, but before she could make her presence known, the conversation turned upon such a delicate subject that she became aware how embarrassing it would be for both to discover a listener. Therefore, she at once concealed herself behind a tree. As it happened, however, they stopped just

at that moment, and, greatly to her regret, she had to hear the rest of the conversation. The Signor, it appeared, had embraced the cause of the South with ardor, and now asked Miss Bixby to undertake the charge of Verdi during his absence. After a good deal of circumlocution, Miss Bixby had declared there was but one relationship that could make such a charge proper, and, in fact, had thrown herself at the Signor's head. In vain had the poor man declared that it was simply a case of teacher and pupil, of guardian and ward, and that he would pay *beaucoup d' argent*. Miss Bixby was firm, and the Signor was to make up his mind by afternoon. "He will be here soon," concluded Mrs. de St. Cyr. "Where is she?"

Madam Washington Randolph was incapable of reply. With her usual credulity where the Frenchwoman's tales were concerned, a credulity which no one else shared, she did not in the least doubt the correctness of the account to which she had just listened. But, granted that the seeing and hearing were strictly accidental, how explain Mrs. de St. Cyr's even mentioning the matter, to say nothing of giving full particulars? On that, however, she dwelt less than on her own part in listening to her. Of course, she had not had the slightest idea of what was coming, nor had she had, could she have stopped it when once the Frenchwoman had begun; yet, innocent as she was, she felt herself *particeps criminis*.

Mrs. de St. Cyr was just about to repeat her question when the Professor, accompanied by Verdi, appeared.

Ignoring the Frenchwoman, the Signor rushed with a lamentable countenance towards Madam. "Ah, Madame," he cried, "I have one great desire to go to the battle for you and the yong lahdees, but what then is to arrive to this *petit ange*? He has found here moathaires and sistaires; and now——!" Here he drew his shoulders up to his ears, and threw out his hands, palms uppermost, as any day you may see a Roman cab-driver do, when arguing the matter of *pour boire*. Then taking Verdi's hand, he led him up to Madam and made him kneel at her feet. "Will you not, Madame, of your so great goodness, keep him for me till I return? You have no son. If I fall, I give him to you for your own. It is the only way I can show my gratitude to you and the yong lahdees."

Now, Madam, though outwardly self-possessed, was really suffering in body and mind, both from the changes that had already taken place and the greater ones coming with the proposed migration. Sallie Preston had confided to us that what was preying upon her mind most was the thought of separation from her husband's grave. "Carter Randolph," she had heard her mother say, "if only prince-consort, was a dearly-loved one." For the second time I had mentally to reconstruct Madam, and this time it was even more difficult than before. It was easier to imagine her house on fire from novel-reading than her heart on fire with love for any man. Yet Mrs. Preston was right. I think too that Madam saw more clearly than those about her the

gravity of the struggle in which we were engaging, and could not help wondering if—the beloved grave once abandoned—she would ever see it again.

So, though appreciating to the full the Signor's proposed sacrifice, she could not help feeling that this was no time for adding to her responsibilities. "My dear sir," she said, "I honor your heroism, and I am grateful for your devotion to myself and my daughters. But these are times when we know not what a day may bring forth. We are going to our kindred in the Valley indeed, but it may be only to drift from place to place according to the fortunes of war." Madam concluded by offering, in terms that could not offend the sensitive Italian, to undertake all expenses for the child, wherever his father might decide to place him.

It was some time before the Professor could understand that Madam's decision was final. When he did, he was in despair. "Then it must be the Yankee Mees," he wailed, and, as if his lamentation had conjured her up, the "Yankee Mees," with the twins and Sallie Preston, that moment entered. Regardless of the presence of the latter, and of that of the Frenchwoman, who sat regarding the scene with malevolent eyes, he tottered up to the governess. "It is fate," he said. "I will marry with you, and you will be a moathaire to this *petit ange*," and he caught up the child who had been kneeling all this time, and clasped him convulsively. "And I will go to the battle for Madam and the yong lahdees." It did not occur to him to add, "and for you."

But the *petit ange*, it soon appeared, was no party to such an arrangement. Struggling out of his father's arms, he protested, with gestures that were a very fair reproduction of the Signor's, that he would not have "that ole 'ooman" for his moathaire, that he wanted his dear Eliza Jane.

"But if we can not have her, *mon ange*?"

"Oh," broke in Miss Bixby, "then you have asked her!"

"One hondred time," confessed the Signor, ingenuously. "But *monsieur son pere* say *que non*, *ses jeunes freres* say *que non*, and, *helas!* she say *que non* herself." The Signor, though almost weeping, was not at all embarrassed. He could have performed all the functions of life as publicly and as coolly as Louis XIV himself.

Here Madam, thinking it quite time the pair most concerned should be left to themselves, withdrew, motioning the young people to follow. As for Mrs. de St. Cyr, neither hint nor direct suggestion could move her from her coign of vantage. Presently she appeared with the result of the conference. The Signor, moved to doubt perhaps by the mention of Eliza Jane, wished to be engaged only provisionally. If Eliza Jane could be brought to change her mind, the offer to Miss Bixby was to be considered withdrawn; if Eliza Jane remained obdurate, Miss Bixby was to consider the matter.

Now, the Frenchwoman had always hated Miss Bixby—entirely without reason, let me in justice to the

latter say—and here was an opportunity to gratify her malice. Seeing Verdi's tears, and hearing Polly Coon still farther prejudicing him by wholly fabulous tales of the governess's enormities, she joined the pair as they sauntered along the road, professing the deepest interest in what she heard. Mrs. de St. Cyr detested Polly Coon, and the feeling was cordially reciprocated, but what child is not flattered by having a grown person as a listener to and a believer in her little lies? Warming to her work, Polly described how she was beaten every hour of her school life; and even sometimes kept all night, to be starved and immured in a coal-black dungeon. Poor little Verdi, not old enough to see impossibilities in the romance, wept bitterly.

"Pauvre petite!" exclaimed the Frenchwoman. "And are these the marks of her blows on your leetl' legs?"

Polly, who had divested herself of her shoes and stockings, and walked along swinging them in her hand, looked down. A few days before, she had fallen out of a swing while high in air—escaping as naughty children so often do, without cut or break, though with a good many bruises. The legs, being now in the black-and-blue stage, showed to advantage. It had never occurred to her to make use of them in the present emergency, but it did not take her long to see their value as damning evidence.

"Yes," she said sadly. Verdi roared.

"Why don't you show them to your father?"

"'Cos he's off fightin'."

"Then why don't you show them to the Professor?"

"Sho' 'nuff!" said Polly, her eyes sparkling.

That very evening, as it happened, Mr. Coon came home on a flying visit. The miller was bent on doing his part in the struggle, but he was in constant apprehension as to what might happen to Polly in his absence. Aunt Nancy, he knew, was but a poor creature in emergencies, and he had no other "kin" more likely to be able to manage her. What more natural than to think of the governess, and to offer an inducement that, he considered, would make the care of Polly worth while. So, before going to the Mill, he made his way to Washington Place and asked for her.

Mr. Coon went as directly to the point as the Professor had done. Here again it was a case of angel. Being a man in whom was no guile, he spoke of his affection—not for the woman he was asking to marry him, but for the mother of his child. "Polly is the very moral of her," said he, "so you can judge if she wa'n't worth any man's lovin'." (Miss Bixby thought she could, if the resemblance extended to manners and morals.) As things were, Mr. Coon went on, he could not keep away from the scrimmage, and he could not keep away from Polly; and every time he came home he ran the risk of capture, which would make things worse for the child than ever. After living with Madam, Miss Bixby might think herself "a cut above a miller," but, he naïvely added, he rather reckoned she was more of his kind than Madam's, and would perhaps feel more at home at the

Mill than in the Mansion-House. If she would marry him at once and undertake the safe-keeping of Polly, he would make her a good husband if he lived through the war; and he would at once settle upon her such a sum as would make her independent if he fell. If she wanted time to think it over, he would come for an answer next morning; but it must be bright and early, as the Yankees might be after him.

Again, with much dignity, Miss Bixby promised to consider. Even her calm, however, was slightly disturbed when she found that the miller's "at once" was literal. "I'll bring Elder Jobson along," he said as he was leaving.

"But what if——?"

"There'll be no harm done," said he, and was off.

Miss Bixby had promised to consider, and she did consider all through the silent watches. She had fully made up her mind to accept one of the proposals, and her mind was busy summing up the pros and cons of each. With Professor Faccio she would have higher social position, more travel—and she was eager to add to her Hawaiian experience—and more excitement generally. With Mr. Coon there would probably be more solid benefits—the miller was a well-to-do man—and he had shown himself liberal in money matters, whereas the Signor had not touched on settlements at all. As to the "angels"—once in possession of them, she did not doubt her ability to cope with either.

Naturally she was a good deal elated. If her wooings had not been as ardent as she fancied wooings usually are, the number of her wooers atoned. She had never in her life had an offer of marriage, and now here were two in one day. When, next morning, Mr. Fraser asked for a private interview with her, she wondered whether proposals, like Mammy's "whuppin's an' brakin's," went by threes.

But, alas! Mr. Fraser had not come to make another offer, but to withdraw one of those already made. Mr. Coon, hearing that a party were on their way to seize him, had gone off suddenly in the night, but before going, had roused Mr. Fraser and given him a message for the governess. He was to say that the miller had given up unreservedly the scheme he had broached to her; he wouldn't marry her to be General Lee.

"But, my good man," said Mr. Fraser, "this is not a very pleasant errand. If you have asked Miss Bixby to marry you, you can't withdraw without some explanation."

"She won't need no explanation, if she's got a conscience," said the miller. "But if she has the cheek to say anything, jest you tell her I've seen Polly's poor little legs. That ought to settle her!"

And before Mr. Fraser could ask an explanation of the explanation, Mr. Coon, warned by the whistle of a friendly scout, disappeared.

The puzzled but always chivalrous envoy gave such a version of the message with which he had been charged

as would have delighted the Euphuists; Polly's extremities, for instance, being softened into "the chances of war," etc. But as Miss Bixby had been, during the night, decidedly inclining to Mr. Coon's side—so much so that at that moment she had on the stuff dress, the embroidered collar, and the cameo brooch—she was mortified enough to require a moment's time for preparation before making any reply. In her talks on presence of mind, already referred to, she had not mentioned this species of dilemma; but she had doubtless considered it herself, for she at once recalled a case apropos—that of a townswoman of her own who, having been jilted, had brought an action for breach of promise, and had lived comfortably on the damages forever after. To do her justice, however, I believe Miss Bixby was really incapable of this. And then—there was the Professor.

Yes, there was indeed the Professor. Even then his strident tones were heard without: "Where ees Mees Bixbee? Where ees the Yankee Mees? It must that I speak to her *à l'instant!*" If the one suitor was a laggard, the other, Miss Bixby reflected with satisfaction, was eager enough.

But, as was soon perceived, it was not the impatience of love, but of rage, that prompted the torrent of words which the Professor was pouring out with his usual abandon. "Marry Mees Bixbee?" A snort. "Commit my angel to the keeping of a morderess?" He hissed out the sibilants as if there had been a dozen of them. When Miss Bixby approached, he shook his fist in her

face. He stamped his foot. "*Je vous chasse!*" he screamed. The accused actually recoiled before the menacing hand and glaring eyes.

Having delivered himself, the Signor rushed from the room, but a moment later thrust his head in at a window. "I have seen, *tout le monde* has seen, the *pau-au-auvre* leetl' legs of *la malheureuse* Pollee Coon." With another snort and glare he was gone.

Of course the little sinner's iniquity soon found her out, and, equally of course, there was no one so shocked at her depravity and so bent upon reprisals as Mrs. de St. Cyr, the principal witness in the case. Madam, truly sorry for the mortification, congratulated the governess on such a scene having taken place before marriage instead of after.

Miss Bixby acquiesced. Yet I think that had the Professor sued for forgiveness, he would have got it. But he did not. Eliza Jane proving still obdurate, he went away, taking Verdi with him. His parting words were that Polly Coon should have been smothered at birth. Except for a vague rumor that he had returned to his native land, we heard of him no more.

Polly Coon, not in the least ashamed of what had taken place, but, on the contrary, glorying in Miss Bixby's discomfiture, appeared at Madam's a morning or two afterwards with the news that Mrs. de St. Cyr had gone also. We thought at first it was one of Polly's romances, but the news was really true. Without a word of gratitude or even farewell to Madam, after her

thousand generousities; without provision for faithful Richt, after her long years of ill-paid service; and with but a few hours' warning, she was off. It seemed so incredible that Ernie and Sallie Preston walked over to the deserted house, and, finding the door locked, had to content themselves with looking in at the windows, through one of which they saw Rose-Marie's tail still hanging on a nail in the kitchen. From there they went to the Mill, where good Richt had been received as a godsend by Aunt Nancy. The Frenchwoman had not given the slightest hint as to where she was going. Madam alone made excuses for her. The trying times had doubtless upset her, and then there had been ugly rumors in regard to one of the Smithers slaves that had made his escape, and was supposed to be in hiding in the neighborhood. Doubtless they would hear from her in good time. Miss Bixby was certain she had followed the Signor.

As for the governess, her chances of matrimony actually went by threes after all. The cousin with whom she had sailed had in the meantime lost his wife, and his inclination had turned to Miss Bixby as her successor. He was now in the Spanish trade, and the governess brightened up as she thought of revelling in the fruits of Spain, seeing the Alhambra, and, it might be, donning a mantilla. Madam saw the letter in which Captain Silas made his overtures and pronounced it a very manly production. What she had said of the Alhambra suggested our parting gift to her—a very beautiful set of Washington Irving's works.

After all, what interested us most in these happenings was the item that had been revealed incidentally. Eliza Jane, the plain-looking, the unassuming, had been proposed to, and that not only once, but "one hundred times!" And, more wonderful still, she had given no sign.

"I think she might at least have told you," said Sallie Preston to Ernie. Ernie had been thinking so herself, but on hearing it from another, she felt bound to defend Eliza Jane's discretion and delicacy. "No," she said firmly, "I approve of her reticence and respect her for it."

Interest now centered in our own affairs once more. When the time for departure came, Madam made some excuse for delay, Ernie refused to leave her mother, and Janie refused to leave Ernie. The old Miss Randolphs, however, declared that the only way to make sure of Madam's following was to bear away one of her daughters as hostage; and the parting being, as every one fancied, for such a short time, Janie at last yielded and went.

Scarcely were the Prestons gone when their beautiful mansion went up in flames—the work of an undiscovered incendiary. Mr. Fraser Preston, who had remained in it, now made one of Madam's household, so that the Prestons' loss was to them a gain. Too frail to bear arms, yet drawn out of his seclusion by the stirring times, Mr. Fraser became adviser-in-general to those who were left, and by his unfailing courtesy and kindness gained the hearts even of our enemies.

CHAPTER XII

Life seemed strange to us without Miss Bixby's platitudes and Signor Faccio's philippics. But there were to be greater changes. It was a real shock to Madam when Mr. Tompkins announced his intention of wearing the blue, and an even greater shock to Mr. Tompkins when William Alexander appeared before him in the grey. "Good God!" exclaimed the father, "what if we should meet face to face on the field?" But for the juniors there was a more serious defection than Mr. Tompkins's in store. When the father resigned his position, preparatory to taking his family to New York, we not only bewailed Eliza Jane's going, but sympathized with her as a martyr to his prejudices. And so we should have continued to do, had she not with the sincerity that was her second nature owned that his opinions were also her own. Between this confession of faith and her departure there were days of avoidance that must have been hard to bear. Madam, with the justice for which she was distinguished, made no difference. Each, she said, must do as conscience dictated, and no one must be blamed for doing so. And many were the gifts from her stores and from her purse that found their way into Eliza Jane's trunks. At the last, Janie returned her clasps and kisses with something like the old affection; but Ernie, whom she loved more than all the rest of us put together, and who, I believe, truly

loved her, did not even appear. But as Eliza Jane, weeping bitterly, went along the road, she was met by her friend, dashing along on Sultan—with her Harry Randolph, who had scarcely waited to see his family settled in the Valley before he was back at Washington Place. As Ernie drew near, she brought her horse to a walk. Eliza Jane's heart beat fast—her darling had thought better of it after all.

But she did not yet know her darling. Warm-hearted Harry doffed his cap and bowed low; but Ernie, on whom her sad eyes were fixed, looked her full in the face and gave no sign. She had slackened her pace only to cut her more effectually. So the English girl went away broken-hearted.

Much of Ernie's time was now spent on horseback, for she had constituted herself the recruiting-officer of the district. Not that there were many to recruit; but she encouraged Harry to get together the younger boys, mostly louts from distant farms, and to put them through their paces; while she, riding in front, now criticised, now encouraged, the embryo soldiers. Whether they were all in love with the Cause I do not know; but to the last one they were all in love with Ernie Washington Randolph.

Our war-hero in chief was Harry, who at last, in spite of his aunt's wishes and Mr. Fraser's commands, fairly ran away, to fight by the side of his father and brothers. For our scapegrace Nature had done her best. With his proud features, fair curling hair and gallant bear-

ing, we fondly thought him the image of the Young Chevalier as represented in Mr. Fraser's picture. I need hardly say that in running away, it was Ernie who was his encourager and abettor.

Harry and Armand were great friends; and we who admired them both used sometimes to dispute as to which was the handsomer. During the last year, Armand had shot up wonderfully; like a weed, his grandmother used to say—a comparison which we resented. Eighteen months older than Harry, counting by time, he might in some respects have been a decade his senior; the circumstances of his life having made a naturally thoughtful and sensitive disposition more thoughtful and more sensitive. In our discussion on the boy's looks, Ernie was generally silent. If pressed, however, she declared for her cousin—a circumstance from which you may deduce what you will.

I have said that when without volition the past comes back to me, it is almost always at the Tryst we are. And many a time I hear, as clearly as I heard long ago, young voices singing—perhaps the sweet and sad

“Way down upon the Swanee River,”

which Janie in her beautiful soprano and Ernie in her mellow contralto would sing slowly, softly, and with a pathos that would almost break the heart to hear. You of the North who rattle it off because it is a “negro melody,” get a Southerner of voice and taste and heart to sing it for you, and you will understand.

Or, again, we are singing the Canadian voyageur's best-loved *chanson*:

*"En roulant ma boule:
Rouli, roulant, ma boule roulant;
En roulant ma boule roulant,
En roulant ma boule,"*

learned from Armand, of course, who had had it borne to him many a night in bed, as the great rafts floated down the Ottawa past the Château.

But there is another vision of Ernie that comes very often—a vision connected with those early war days. Mr. Fraser, indefatigable in his efforts to interest Madam, is reading to her on the great gallery, old Ponto sleeping in the sunshine at their feet:

*"Then, in the boyhood of the year,
Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere,
Rode through the coverts of the deer,
With blissful treble ringing clear.
She seemed a part of joyous spring:
A gown of grass-green silk she wore,
Buckled with golden clasps before;
A light-green tuft of plumes she bore
Closed in a golden ring.*

*"As fast she fled thro' sun and shade,
The happy winds upon her played,
Blowing the ringlet from the braid.
She looked so lovely as she swayed
The rein with dainty finger-tips——"*

The musical voice suddenly ceases. There is the sound of horses' feet, and the reader's eyes light up as

looking down the broad avenue he sees approaching Armand and—surely Guinevere herself! It is not indeed the boyhood, but the full maturity of the year; the “grass-green silk” has changed into a dark-green cloth; and the critic might easily find other differences. But the beauty, the grace, the distinction, are all here in this girl of seventeen. Southern girls mature early, and Ernie had been one of the elect from her birth. Mr. Fraser, smiling, repeats softly, as if to himself,

“She looked so lovely, as she swayed
The rein with dainty finger-tips,”

then, turning to Madam again, after just a glance at Armand,

“A man had given all other bliss,
And all his worldly worth for this—
To waste his whole heart in one kiss
Upon her perfect lips.”

I have never tried to describe Ernie’s beauty to you, for I should but disappoint you and myself. Her features, taken separately, might not be perfect, but they made a perfect face; and brunette as she was called, her coloring was neither the pallor of one kind of dark beauty nor the full bloom of another, but a mingling of the two, more exquisite than either alone. Her dark hair curled softly, and she wore it in a style peculiar to herself. Looking at it, you could never be sure whether it had been arranged in ringlets and then caught carelessly up, or had been “done up” in the first place and had

refused to remain so. The description gives an untidy impression, but the coiffure did not. The fact was that while hair-brushing, performed by Phyllis, had the dignity of a function, hair-dressing, performed by Ernie herself, took about two minutes. Mrs. de St. Cyr, mistaking its carelessness for high art, made many efforts to learn the secret of it, and actually appeared on one gala occasion with her own sparse and grizzled locks arranged in imitation of it.

As I write, I open a little case that lies before me. Ernie's face, framed as I have described, is to be found in many homes; and just because of that coiffure—the picture being only a head—strangers who look at it are puzzled to know whether it represents some one now living or some one who lived a century or so ago. But there is no mistake about the faded ambrotype. The "shot" silk, the deep lace collar fastened by a pearl brooch, the polka sleeves with lace sleeves of the same fashion under them, all mark an era. I have seen girls—themselves transformed by hideous *gigots* into monsters "a good cloth yard and more" across the shoulders—open the case, and miss the exquisite face in their eagerness to pounce upon the sleeves and cry, "Oh, what a guy!" Guy indeed? Opinions differ, my good young people. And even were there no long-ago and no Ernie Washington Randolph, I would challenge you to produce a more graceful arm-covering, a more artful arm-revealer, than the despised polka.

But it was the life with which the girl was overflowing, the life that pulsed from her heart to her

finger-tips, and of which the *esprit* credited to her by Mrs. de St. Cyr was but one feature, that made the crowning charm. And that can be but poorly reproduced in any picture, even when the painter is the sun himself.

But I am wandering from the day in question. The previous spring, Armand had been recalled to Canada earlier than usual, the Seigneur positively refusing to allow him to take part in the American struggle. "Why should you thrust yourself into a Yankee embroglio?" he asked. "Let them fight it out themselves." In vain Armand argued that he owed his friends something for years of kindness. "And do you owe me nothing?" demanded the Seigneur. Armand fretted until mid-summer, still, however, looking forward to the autumn. But what was his dismay when he found that his uncle had other plans for him. Accompanied by the tutor, he was to make the grand tour, this having been in the Seigneur's young days a *sine quâ non* in the education of a gentleman. A flying farewell to Virginia was all he could wring from his guardian, and that only after he had pledged his word to give to his friends there (he spoke of them collectively as his grandmother) but two short days.

Well, in the ride from which we have just seen them returning, Ernie had not only woven all her old witcheries about the lad, but had shown him more of her heart than he had ever been permitted to see, so that he was now as wild to fight as Harry Randolph himself. But about the next step the pair differed. Ernie, arguing that

all was fair in war (Armand might have reminded her that she was not quoting the proverb entire), would have had him throw his promise to the winds, put spurs to his horse, and fly wherever the fight was likely to be hottest. But Armand had given his word of honor, and he meant to keep it. He would go back at once and, face to face with the Seigneur, announce his intentions. Ernie at last was forced to yield, though with something of regret that Armand lacked the fire of her other knight. Little she then knew that it would have been easier far for him to face a battery than to contradict the Seigneur.

The interview with the latter would have been as brief as it was stormy had Armand's gratitude not come into play. "I think you owe me something," said the Seigneur. "Ah, I know how much," exclaimed the lad. "No," said the Seigneur passionately, "you can never know how much!" and he turned abruptly away and paced the room with darkling brow. Was it the same thought that caused the access of passion that, to the Seigneur's own astonishment, subdued it? Whatever the cause, he for once condescended to argue and to propose a compromise. "If you owe me anything, you can at least meet me half-way. Go abroad; remain six months—half the time I had planned. If on your return you still wish to carry out this folly, I shall put no farther obstacles in your way. But I think it fair to tell you that it may cost you Beaulieu."

I doubt if Armand so much as heard the threat; he was not thinking of Beaulieu. Love on the one side and gratitude on the other were warring within him, and, being a youth of conscience as well as of heart, he had been almost fearing to discover on which side duty lay. Here surely was a way to reconcile them. "Might he have time to think it over?" he asked. He was given time, though the Seigneur was quite aware that time to think it over meant time to consult the Washington Randolphins. "Meantime, not a word to me on the subject," commanded the Seigneur.

A girl's jeers settled the matter. Fully expecting Armand back as fast as trains could bring him, Ernie fairly lost her head when she found his uncle's influence was likely to count. She said bitter things, and they were very bitter. Armand had written of all he owed his uncle and guardian, and had also tried to comfort himself—though the proud girl thought he was trying to comfort her—with the reminder that should he now yield, six months would soon pass; "and then——"

He did not finish the sentence, but Ernie finished it for him. "'And then——' we shall not need you! Yes, 'six months will soon pass,' and many a gallant heart will pass with them, while you will be making the grand tour. Pray stay with your uncle and guardian, or with your nurse the Abbé, out of the reach of stray bullets. I make my compliment to your great-grandmother—the only man in the family."

Do not hate our Ernie. The lust of war was warping a noble nature; but you can afford to forgive her, for she was yet to suffer more bitterly than she made others suffer.

But what Frenchman—or half-Frenchman—would bear such a taunt? With a very pale face Armand sought his uncle again and would not be silenced. He was curtly told that if he left Beaulieu then, he could never return to it. He went.

But not to sue for restoration to favor, not to take it even should it be a freely-offered gift. It was with no small satisfaction that Ernie heard of his joining the army; it was also with incredulity that she found day after day passing without his giving a sign. Even when with a part of his regiment he passed within a short distance of the Place, he kept severely aloof. Ernie learned accidentally that Mr. Fraser had seen him, and that her mother had had grateful messages. But to her there came no message at all.

CHAPTER XIII

Conscience told Ernie that the first overtures ought to come from her, but pride was stronger than conscience. She was at first indignant, bewildered, that the boy whom she had looked upon as her willing slave should have thrown off the yoke, but on thinking the matter over she was not so ill-pleased. In fact, had Armand been the most artful schemer in the world, he could not have served his cause better than by showing her that his pride was equal to her own. "My!" said Harry to her on one of his flying visits, "what on earth have you done to him to get his back up like that?" "Like what?" said Ernie, affecting surprise. "Oh, like the backs of all the de Marignans piled on top of each other."

Madam had lingered at Washington Place so long that now she was not free to leave. Our part of the State was now figuring—temporarily we fondly thought—as a State by itself. The Place was lonely indeed after all the years of joy. At times there was excitement enough of a sort. Our district was still almost as often occupied by our troops as by those of the enemy, and sometimes for weeks together there was skirmishing in the neighborhood. The Federals were generally civil; but naturally it was a case of spoiling the Egyptians, and if they did not get what they wanted by asking for it, they took it. It was no uncommon thing for Madam to feed friends and foes in one day.

Always dignified, always courteous, Madam yet never permitted that her position should be misunderstood. Her chief annoyance was from the house of Smithers, that in other days had been so severely snubbed by Mammy Sarah. The head of it, belonging to the large family of the Vicar of Bray, was resolved to come out on top whether North or South came out with him, and consequently played with both sides; while his son, a young man much more dangerous than his father, joined the Federals, and now appeared in the neighborhood as lieutenant of volunteers. In this capacity he at once proceeded to magnify his office and to avenge the slights of former times. After a requisition on the Washington Randolph stores, one day, he informed Madam in a free-and-easy way that he "intended dropping in some evening soon to see herself and her pret—" (he checked himself just in time) "and her daughter," Madam drew herself proudly up. "Pray make no mistake, sir," said she. "I am willing to obey the scriptural command, 'if thine enemy hunger, feed him,' but it is not at all necessary to enter into social relations with him, even were he of the class otherwise entitled to such." "Bud" Smithers, half insolent, half cowed, attempted a laugh. "I reckon you'll change your mind before long," said he.

It was through this Bud Smithers, however, that we came to know another Federal officer, whom I may gratefully call our good genius—though from his being connected with the saddest event that befell us, we were for some time disposed to regard him as just the op-

posite. One of Smithers's ambitions was to be—or appear—on intimate terms with his captain—a man of entirely different antecedents, manners and character, who had at that time just joined the regiment. On the pretence of old acquaintance with the Washington Randolphs, he brought this officer to the Place, one afternoon, and informed Mammy Sarah they had come to tea. Mammy took the affair upon herself, just as she had taken on herself the affair of the invitation sent by his parents years before, and set them down to such fare as had never even in war times furnished forth the Washington Randolph table, crowning it with what the Southerner and the darky most despise in the way of food, “col’ light bread.” Madam, seeing the table after the officers left, remonstrated, but Mammy tossed her head. “De Bible may say ter feed dat Bud Smuvvers, though I ain’t nebeh seed de passage, but it don’ nowhah tell him to fix his great big ugly mouf foh my waffles. De odeh one looked lak a gen’l’mán. He seemed awful ’shamed, an’ didn’ eat nuffin’. I done heah him tell de Smuvvers man dat I serbe him des’ right.”

As for Ernie, she was “neither to hold nor to bind”; and this Smithers, who had conceived a passion for the beautiful girl, growing infuriated at the scorn with which she treated him, became a very potent instrument in the evil that followed. On the very evening of the meagre tea, the officers chanced to meet her in the avenue; and, as usual, she drew her skirts out of the way of possible contamination and was haughtily oblivious of the bared

and bent heads. Smithers thereupon put himself directly in her path and took off his hat again. Without a moment's hesitation Ernie selected from some change she happened to have in her hand a large copper cent and dropped it into the hat.

"By God!" screamed Smithers, quite beside himself, "I will have you arrested for this. Captain Vernon, you saw——"

"I saw nothing," said Vernon sternly. "Come on, you fool!"

A few days later, Ernie was surprised to find her mother in apparently amicable conversation with Captain Vernon. The latter had sought out Mr. Fraser and explained the misconception under which he had accompanied Smithers, who had represented himself as an old friend of the family; and Mr. Fraser, appreciating the officer's kindly intentions, and knowing well how useful such a friend might prove, had brought him to the Place, to make his apologies himself. Then it transpired that they had a mutual friend—a little nurse who was at that moment in New York, ministering to Captain Vernon's young brother, who had been dangerously wounded in one of the late skirmishes, and had just recovered sufficiently to be taken home. They had often wondered what had become of Eliza Jane—Ernie most of all, though she would not have acknowledged it for the world—and now they knew. She was, the Captain said, the best nurse he had even seen, and the one most in demand among the sick and wounded men. And it made

not the slightest difference to her whether her patients were of the Northern army or of the Southern. How could it, she asked, when her own brother and almost all her old friends were among the latter.

In humility as well as in self-forgetfulness, Madam judged the girl she had befriended was still unchanged. For, Captain Vernon said, she had been anxious in speaking of them to make quite clear her father's position on the estate, and she had referred to herself as only a very humble friend. But tears of gratitude and affection had come into her eyes as she spoke of the happy days she had spent among them; and once, she who was so brave by sick-beds and death-beds quite broke down. It was when she entreated Captain Vernon to use all his influence in their behalf should they be at any time in trouble. The officer did not mention this intercession—he could imagine that to the proud beauty who had swept past him in the avenue it would be anything but agreeable and to Madam herself perhaps a work of supererogation—but in the dark days that were coming he faithfully remembered and faithfully redeemed the promise he had made to the little English girl. Meantime, he privately begged Mr. Fraser that if at any time he could be of use to them, he would let him know; and as it was scarcely likely that he would remain much longer at that time in the vicinity, he supplied that good friend of the Washington Randolphs with an address that would always find him.

To Ernie—who, you may be sure, disappeared at once when she saw the hated uniform in the house, and had

to hear the news of Eliza Jane from her mother—the English girl's connection with the army was an added and a deadly offense, embittering her anew just as she was beginning to think not quite so hardly of her. As for Captain Vernon—one moment she declared him a mean-spirited Yankee, stooping to curry favor with them after Mammy Sarah's insult, and the next an impertinent upstart who was attempting to patronize them. When, walking or riding, she met him face to face, she no longer drew her skirts aside; she simply ignored his existence.

Two years passed away, and still Armand had never appeared at Washington Place. Except for short intervals he had been with Jackson, from Bull Run, where that hero earned the name by which he will go down through the ages, to the glorious days of Chancellorsville, whose triumph was all too dearly purchased by his fall. Neither Harry nor Armand had had so much as a scratch; they seemed to bear charmed lives. There were others fighting for us not so fortunate—others whose names do not appear here, but in whom some of us were even more interested than in Harry and Armand. If you could look into the treasures of some Southern women—high-spirited girls then, old and often sad women now—you would find many a relic of friendship or young love that through all their owners' vicissitudes have been kept sacred from those days. What tears have watered them! For what strange scenes did they exchange the old familiar places, when those who cherished them—dispossessed of home, fortune, and friends (ex-

cept those as poor as themselves)—went out into the world to seek—and often, alas! not to find—daily bread. The saddest stories I know are not of the boys who flashed out their lives in one swift, glad, glorious moment on the field of battle, but of their gentle sisters, who—fallen from their high estate, and bereft of everything that made life dear to them—had yet the high courage to live on; and who brought to their changed condition a dignity, a sweetness, a divine patience, that even after all these years I, less worthy than the least of them, can not think of without tears. Armand did well to be proud of his great-grandmother; but the *Concièrgerie* and the guillotine soon passed, while some of those other lives, after long, long years of endurance, are still going on.

Through the two years in which Armand never came to us, there was one that came often. The almost incredibly short time in which Harry on his brief leaves could reach us and be gone again, the risks he ran, the narrow escapes he made, would fill a book by themselves. And warmly as every one welcomed him, there was no one, he could not help seeing, who welcomed him quite so warmly as his beautiful cousin. What were risks in comparison with her smiles? The boy's heart that had beat so high with pure love of adventure began to beat higher with another kind of love. He had always thought with the rest of us that the grand prize was for Armand, and admiring him as he did, he had not envied him his luck; but the long absence of one and the long

silence of both (for now neither ever spoke to him of the other) were surely signs that they had had for each other but a passing fancy. Had he been older, his argument might have been different.

But, for a little while, I really think Ernie's heart was turning to her cousin. To be sure, he was just her own age; and she had always thought of him not only as a brother, but as a younger brother—as a boy. But he was beginning to be noted for feats that were by no means boyish; and then—ah! it would be such a satisfaction to show Armand she had never cared. Harry on his part was counting up his nineteen years, and recalling that his father had been married before he was of age. He made up his mind that as soon as he had won his shoulder-straps—a distinction at which Armand had already arrived—he would try his fortune.

But, as it happened, on the very day on which he had achieved this glory, he sat late with Armand over the embers of a camp-fire. An engagement was expected on the following day, and Armand, it appeared, was possessed by a presentiment not unknown to soldiers. He was certain the battle would be his last.

Harry laughed at him; he had no gloomy presentiments himself, and no faith in those of others. "We shall live to be sixty," he said, hitting upon what seemed to him the very extremity of old age. "By that time there will be another war with somebody or other; and we will have youngsters of our own, whom we will forbid to get into it, just as our fathers and uncles forbade us. And

they will run away to it, just as we ran away; and they will be right, and in our hearts we will be proud of them. I say, Armand, fancy me a gray-headed pater-familias!" And Harry's clear laugh rang out. I never heard a laugh so brimming over with life and joy as his.

"Oh, by Jove!" he went on, "life is good; I want to live. I mean to live. Talk of people being weary of life! I could live a thousand years—riding and fighting Yankees, and——" Here he paused. He could not say even to Armand, "and loving my beautiful cousin." But he said it to himself, and took off his cap as he said it. And then he finished aloud, "And in all the thousand years there would never be a dull moment."

Then Armand turned to him with a very kind smile: "You have something to live for—father, brothers, and sisters, aunts and——cousins."

"And grandaunts," put in Harry. "Let us never forget Aunt Pocahontas." And he laughed again.

"You are a lucky fellow. Well, an unlucky fellow is going to ask a favor of you." He took out of his pocket three letters. "If I *should* happen to fall, will you see that my uncle has one of these, and will you yourself give the others to Mr. Fraser and——Ernie?"

"And Ernie?" exclaimed Harry.

"You are not surprised, are you?" asked Armand, smiling sadly.

"But I thought you had quarrelled."

"So we had—in a way. She was disappointed that I was not such a Hotspur as her *beau cousin*, and——

well, we are both proud, you know. And then, I dare say she never cared, perhaps never would have cared, for me."

"But why, if you cared for her like that, did you never go near Washington Place when we were in the neighborhood? And why on earth have you never been near her since?"

"I *have* been near her since—twice; the only times I have ever had leave, and they were terribly short ones."

"And didn't you make it up then?"

"I never spoke to her; she does not even know I was there. Once I lay all night under a tree on the lawn, watching her window; and the other time I saw her coming home in the twilight, and knelt down and kissed the ground her feet had touched, when she had passed."

Poor Harry! I dare say it was only for a moment or two that there was silence between them; but thought is quicker than time, and never in his life had the boy done so much thinking in so short a space. In other circumstances he would have exclaimed against the waste of opportunity, against a reticence so at odds with his own impetuosity; now, he only knew that the castle he had been building had come down with a crash. Hope was not quite dead. Little as he thought of himself compared with his friend, he still could not help believing that Ernie's manner to him had meant something more than that of cousin or sister. On the other hand, it came to him—and it seemed strange that it had not come before—that had she been indifferent to Ar-

mand, either she would have spoken of him in the old friendly way, or she would have mentioned frankly the offense he had given. The silence which heretofore had encouraged him now seemed fatal. At any rate Armand must have his chance. Before he would say a word to her on his own account, he must let her know that Armand loved her, must let her know *how* Armand loved her, how he had shown his love. His all-night vigil, his kissing the dusty road for her sake, would surely move her, and he would tell it all. For our scapegrace was something of a Bayard, you see.

CHAPTER XIV

Armand's presentiment was not fulfilled—the expected engagement indeed did not take place. And shortly after the conversation recorded in the last chapter, Harry appeared at his aunt's. No time could have been more unfortunate. A favorite adventure of his—a lark, he called it—was penetrating the enemy's lines in the enemy's uniform and bringing thence valuable information; in plain English, acting as a spy. His most notable adventure of this kind was done within twenty-four hours after his talk with Armand; and his identity having been discovered, he would assuredly, if taken, suffer a spy's death. Captain Vernon was once more in our neighborhood, where our guerillas had been giving trouble again, but at the moment that a messenger arrived with news of Harry's whereabouts and orders for his capture, the captain himself happened to be absent and Smithers in command. No news could have been more agreeable to Smithers, the bitter enemy of the girl who had flouted him and all on whom she looked with favor. He had long sworn to take Harry, and now he considered the capture certain. Between our guerillas, however, who were apt to strike with the suddenness of lightning, and the connivance of every person, white and black, for miles around, it was by no means so easy as it looked. It would probably have been impossible but for Harry's bravado.

He appeared at the Place on a Saturday evening, and, far from coming by stealth, rode leisurely up the avenue, his new shoulder-straps glittering in the sunset, and darkies young and old bringing up the rear. Entirely ignorant of any special danger, they made a night of it. Even the tea-table, notwithstanding a sad falling-off in the display of silver, was something like that of the olden time. Poultry, always invisible when Smithers was about, appeared miraculously—"des' gittin' down on der knees," Uncle Ab said, "an' prayin' to be et by Marse Harry." Ernie's sore heart took comfort in ministering to him. In vain Mr. Fraser and Madam—without, however, understanding how imminent was the danger—would have had him in hiding. Harry scouted the thought; so did Ernie, I need not say. The two sat talking half the night, and you may be sure Harry fulfilled the chivalrous task he had set himself. And he had his reward—in a way. There was a beautiful color in Ernie's cheeks, there was a softer light in her eyes than there had been since the boys first went away. "And what tree was it under which Armand had lain that night?" and "Whereabout on the road was it he had seen her?" she asked with a bewitching blending of shyness and tenderness that Harry had never seen before, but that made her more adorable than ever. And she would have had him go out with her in the starlight to identify the places, only that he had never thought of asking where they were. And through it all Harry never betrayed himself and never flinched.

Early on Sunday morning, word was brought that Smithers was in pursuit. The cousins had been recalling among other things the affair of the "dole," and neither had the least fear of Smithers as a pursuer. In vain Mr. Fraser commanded, and had his bay—Harry's beautiful black having been overridden—brought up to the door. Harry still laughed and lingered, and Ernie laughed with him.

The latter was just catching the alarm when another officer in gray dashed in. It took Ernie a moment to understand that this tall, manly-looking newcomer was once on a time the stripling Armand. The beautiful girl—even more beautiful than when Armand had seen her last—thought of Harry's confidences and blushed divinely. But Armand did not seem to see her. "For God's sake, go!" he cried to Harry. "Smithers is coming through the wood." And he pointed towards the back of the house.

Ernie—who fancied that the worst that could possibly come to her cousin was capture (and after his hairbreadth escapes she had ceased to believe even that possible)—did not join in the outcry for his flight. Harry, who had grown a shade paler, did not move. In that moment of apparent indifference on Armand's part, the lately-kindled lovelight in the girl's eyes had changed to an angry flame. A fierce impulse to visit on his head the contempt she felt for all the tender thoughts she had indulged in took possession of her.

"I have yet to hear of a Randolph running away," said she.

Armand looked at her at last; then strode up to her, anger fiercer than her own blazing in his eyes. It was no time to speak delicately; he would even be brutal for Harry's sake. "Do you know to what you are giving him up?" said he. "If taken, he will be treated as a spy" (he could not bring himself even then to say all that meant), "and his blood will be on your head."

The color died out of her face. "Is it true, Harry?" she asked falteringly.

"The fortune of war, coz," said he lightly. Mr. Fraser was forcing him away.

In an instant the Amazon melted into the true woman. "Fly!" she cried to Harry. "Oh, I didn't know! I didn't know!" Then, turning to Armand, "Save him!" she entreated. "How could I bear my life if I should have lost him his?"

There was a shout from the wood. Harry dashed through the door, and, taking the steps at a bound, sprang on the bay, which, as though it understood, went off like the wind.

Smithers—sitting awkwardly his long, lank, loose-jointed sorrel that seemed as if it had been made for him—came round the house, three or four soldiers following closely. "Surrender!" he cried. Harry put spurs to his horse. "Surrender, or I fire!" Smithers yelled again, unwilling to give a bullet to one for whom he intended a halter. For answer our boy turned with a smile, took off his cap and waved it. It was soon seen that if it depended on the horses Harry would win. "Fire—at the horse!" cried Smithers. "He must be taken alive." And he fired himself as he gave the order.

Three or four bullets buried themselves in the bay; one, kinder than its fellows, found a more shining mark. As Harry fell—before one of the blue-coated men could touch him—Armand bounded from the shrubbery to his side. One arm hung limp; flying through the bushes, he had been seen and fired at, but no one noticed it then. The other went—oh, so gently—round his friend.

And so they brought them back to the Place, Harry's fair hair all dabbled in blood, and his merry eyes growing dim in death. But for the arrival of Captain Vernon—who returning unexpectedly, and informed of what was going on, rode hastily up—I believe that, dying as he was, Smithers would have had him hanged at Madam's door. Thanks to that chivalrous enemy—and God bless him forever for it!—only a guard was set at the door of the room where he lay; and those who loved him, Armand among them, were with him there alone.

Never was such distress, such despair, as Ernie's. While the others gathered by the dying boy, she cowered down on the floor by the door, bemoaning herself as his murderer. "'Twas I that kept him! 'twas I that kept him!" she whispered.

Even while they thought the end had come, Harry opened his eyes. "Ernie!" he tried to call. Then with a look of distress he whispered, "Oh, I can't make her hear!"

But Ernie was down by his side in an instant—her face buried in the pillows, her sobs coming thick and fast.

"Ah, don't!" said Harry. "It's worse than a bullet to see you cry."

Ernie threw up her hands in despair. "Don't be kind to me, Harry. Oh, if I could only die for you!"

Harry beckoned Mr. Fraser to come nearer, "I want to see Ernie and Armand alone," he said.

Mr. Fraser held the stimulant he had been giving him to his lips, and then led the others from the room.

Then, "You can do better than die for me," said the boy, with his old winsome smile. "You can live for me—for me and for Armand. I never told you—I was only a boy" (already he was speaking of himself as past), "but I too loved you, and not as a cousin or a brother. If my love gives me any claim on you—on you both—pay it now."

"What can we do?" sobbed Ernie.

"You can forgive each other, if there is anything to forgive; and when happier days come, you can let yourselves be happy. And if ever the Randolph pride—or the kind you get from your great-grandmother, you know, Armand—should ever tempt you to be hard again, say to yourselves, 'For Harry's sake!' and let it go."

Across the true heart the two clasped hands. And first the one and then the other laid on the still-smiling lips a kiss that was a sacrament.

And then Harry gave a parting thought to his own. As the others returned, "Dear Aunt, dear Mr. Fraser," he said, in scarcely more than a whisper, "you will comfort them all. Nobody must be sorry. Father will have the girls and his other boys, and I—will have—my dear mother."

And then our beloved Scapegrace's eyes closed forever, and the brave, loyal heart ceased to beat.

CHAPTER XV

In the days that followed, no less than in the moments of Harry's tragedy, we learned what war meant. Captain Vernon's duties called him away at once; and hardly was Armand's broken arm set than Smithers bore him off, those left scarce knowing to what fate. Being unable to reach the ears of the higher powers, the captor announced to Mammy that one of "the damned aristocrats" having escaped him, he meant to make the other swing for both. Mammy, as sad as her mistress, had but little heart for words with him, but she did her best. "Marse Armand hain't done no spyin'," said she. "Then what was he doin' with that young Randolph?" demanded Smithers. "A dog is known by the company he keeps." "Den I feels mighty sorry foh Marse Cap'n Vernon," said Mammy.

It was to "Marse Cap'n Vernon," as I have said, that they owed the quiet last moments with their dear boy and the sad consolation of laying him in peace where he wished to lie. But in spite of the hands clasped across that dying bed, Ernie could feel no comfort, could see no brightness, look which way she would. In the few moments they had had together, Armand, prompted by their generous enemy, had been able to lift from her heart a part at least of the remorse that was consuming her. The orders in regard to Harry had been peremptory, and in pursuance of them every outlet had

been guarded, so that had he escaped the fatal bullet, it would have been only to fall into an ambushade and meet a more ignominious fate further on. Smithers's thirst for revenge had really balked him of it. For this Ernie could thank God. But in the few minutes she had had with Armand, all was constraint, almost coldness. In Armand's mind dwelt the thought that perhaps it was the bright boy she had loved best after all. In the past, he had more than once felt stirrings of jealousy; and certainly in recalling that past, he could find little encouragement for himself. Ernie was in doubt even deeper. Might not Harry in his great heartedness have magnified or put a different interpretation on what Armand had said? What else could account for the latter's constraint? And how terrible for both if he should feel himself bound by Harry's mistake.

And how pale and ill he looked! How she would have liked to comfort him, if only she could have felt she had the right. Days of such bitter grief as theirs were not for love-making, but the maternal touch which is in the heart of every true woman was waking in Ernie's now. She had heard nothing of Smithers's threat, but she imagined Armand languishing in prison till the end of the war, or perhaps sinking under its privations. Life had grown so hard, so unreal to her, that it often seemed a horrible dream from which she must wake or lose her reason.

And at last, by much sad brooding, she had at least a moment of madness. Giving up entirely his old habits

for her sake, Mr. Fraser's daily task was to wile her into the air and sunshine. And one day as they were near where Harry fell, the gleam of something in the shrubbery caught his eye, and going in to see what it might be, he brought out Harry's revolver. With deep emotion Ernie took it from his hands. "Be careful, my dear," said Mr. Fraser, "it is loaded." "I see," said Ernie, who knew at least as much of such a weapon as her old friend. "We might fire it off for him; it would seem like pouring out a libation to the departed." Just then, as they emerged from grounds, they saw, as ill-luck would have it, the long, lank sorrel going up the road in front of them; an officer—Smithers, of course, as they supposed—on its back. In a moment a bullet whizzed past the ear of the officer; and the latter—not Smithers, as it happened, but Captain Vernon—instantly threw back his revolver and returned the fire. It was a shot sent at a venture; but when Vernon turned to meet the supposed guerillas he saw stretched on the ground the form of the gentle scholar whom, like every one else, he had learned to love, and a frantic girl, smoking revolver in hand, throwing herself down beside him. "Good Lord!" exclaimed Vernon, "there must be something fatal about that girl. But," he added to himself, "did ever mortal see such beauty?"

CHAPTER XVI

Let me harrow no one's feelings unnecessarily. Mr. Fraser did not die, though for many weeks we thought he would. And with Ernie—though on seeing what she had brought about, she would have turned the pistol on herself, had she not been forcibly prevented—this dreadful happening was the turning-point. It was in going down with her gentle old friend into the very Valley of the Shadow, and in tending him during the long weeks of convalescence—he never gentler, never dearer, never more thoughtful of his favorite than then—that she first realized all that had come, all that might have come, of her self-will; and that her pride and passion died away and a very real humility took its place. Madam, who had not been informed of Ernie's part in the catastrophe, said little, but appeared anxious and unhappy over the change. She did at last speak to Mr. Fraser, when he was well on the road to recovery. "Ah, my dear old friend, thank God for it," said the invalid. "But I don't want my bright daughter to be sad and spiritless," sighed Madam. Mr. Fraser smiled. "Nor do I," said he, "but I think we need have no anxiety on that score. Give her time, and take my word for it that she will have spirits enough and give us surprises enough."

Mr. Fraser's speech, however, showed less anxiety than he felt. For every day that brought him nearer re-

covery found Ernie paler and sadder and more shadowy. She had been forgiven, but she had not forgotten. And then, notwithstanding all Captain—now Colonel—Vernon's efforts in their behalf, they heard but little of Armand and that little not reassuring. His arm had been badly set, the work had to be done over again, and fever had supervened. They could depend on their kind enemy knowing, and letting them know, if the worst happened; but Ernie, fearing that that worst would be kept from her, was forever suspecting news when there was none, and scanning the faces about her with pitiful eagerness.

And, presently, Madam herself, caught the spirit of hopelessness, of self-upbraiding, and began to pour out her heart to Mr. Fraser on that score. Had she gone with her friends, she said, Harry would never have come to the Place, and his tragedy, and all that had happened to Ernie and Armand, would have been prevented. The long separation from her other daughter too was beginning to tell on her. Mr. Beauchamp was a ready comforter, but he had at that time sad need of comfort himself. It was now the spring of sixty-four, and notwithstanding our great captain's efforts, seconded by the entire South, our prospects were growing ever darker. What could our little starving, ragged army do against the Federals' million, with money to buy and equip and feed other millions? But to Madam her good friend gave no hint of his forebodings. The situation was rendered more harrowing by—of all people in the world—Polly

Coon. During their period of deepest bereavement that young person had been kept forcibly from Washington Place; now, her father having meanwhile been taken prisoner, she was again admitted by way of consolation. Rushing in, on one of Madam's days of deepest melancholy, she threw herself on Ernie, buried her tear-stained face in her skirts, and sobbed out, "Oh, Miss Ernie, I'll be a Johnnie Reb" (she had caught the word from her blue-coat friends), "indeed and double I will, if you just don't die!" Madam looked as if turned to stone. The child, she at once understood, must have heard people talking; it must be then the general impression that Ernie could not get well. In another moment blessed unconsciousness came.

Into the midst of this darkness flashed a sunbeam in the shape of Janie and Sallie Preston. Their coming was such a godsend that we forgot to wonder how they got to us—indeed, I doubt if Madam ever knew all the particulars. They drove up in a farmer's wagon, and it was afterwards discovered that a parcel committed to Mammy's care contained a couple of blue overcoats. I wish you could have heard the tales Janie told. She had heard—and even seen—sad things enough; but these she kept to herself. "Tell us another story, Janie," Mr. Fraser would say; and whether it was that after exhausting truth she had recourse to fiction, I would not like to decide, but certainly there was no end to the adventures. The one Mr. Fraser liked best, though Madam—who, as I think I have mentioned, was rather

lacking in a sense of humor—feared it was disrespectful, was of Miss Pocahontas furnishing information and half a dozen precious hams to a couple of soldiers in gray overcoats, and then discovering under the overcoats two pairs of blue trousers. To these with Atalanta-like swiftness she gave chase, actually returning, when they were all trembling for her, with one of the hams. And I wish you could have heard Janie's glorious voice ringing out in *My Maryland*, bringing just a flicker of the old fire into Ernie's sad eyes. When she had finished Janie rushed from the room and broke into passionate weeping. "She is dying before your eyes," she cried to Mammy, "and you are all too blind to see it!" To her it seemed their very darkest hour.

But it is just before day the very darkest hour comes; and, so far as their personal affairs were concerned, day was ready to break on the Washington Randolphs. One mild spring day, Ernie was out on the terrace with her mother—her eyes on the ground, her thoughts far away—when an exclamation from Madam made her look up, and she saw approaching the short, stout form of the Abbé Langevin, and by his side a taller, statelier figure. She knew instinctively that this must be the Seigneur himself. She had often wondered of late how he would look at her and in what words he would upbraid her for all that had happened to his nephew, should they ever meet. And here he was to show her.

And indeed the Seigneur was coming in no amiable mood. In the haste with which Armand had left Beau-

lieu, Ernie's mocking letter had remained where he had flung it in his first anger; and this being brought to the Seigneur, had solved for him the riddle of his disobedience. After leaving, Armand had written to the Seigneur, pouring out his gratitude, but affirming his right to fight for the woman he loved, even though he believed his love to be hopeless. "The woman!" stormed the Seigneur. "Some pert schoolgirl, doubtless—and he a beardless boy! By heaven, there should be *lettres de cachet* for such cases!"

Lettres de cachet having, however, ceased to flourish even in their habitat the Seigneur took such revenge as he could by sending no letter at all. But there were reasons stronger than ties of blood binding him to the boy; and when news came that Armand was in prison, and even in no small danger of suffering as a spy, he set off at once. The Abbé had gone before him. Leaving the quiet scenes that, with the exception of the memorable journey to Virginia, had made his life, Père Langevin made his way to Armand's prison. There, entrance being denied him, he used the Seigneur's name to gain access to a French personage of high rank, then seeing service with the Union Army, and through his efforts an extension of the delay which Colonel Vernon—again in Washington—had obtained, was granted. An investigation was ordered, and not only was the grave charge fully disproved, but the malice that had prompted it brought to light, and a severe reprimand dealt out to Smithers. And the affair, together with Colonel

Vernon's representations, bringing that young man prominently before his superiors, it chanced that certain financial irregularities of his were disclosed, and shortly afterwards he was dismissed from the army. I may say here that when next we heard of him it was in carpet-bagging days, when he was acting as election-agent for his father, then the nominee of his party for a high office in the State. And one of his devices was an immense handbill, posted all over the district, bearing this extraordinary claim to the people's suffrages: "Vote for Smithers—the man who never wore trousers till he was twelve years old."

But to return to matters that concerned us more nearly. The Seigneur asked not only for life, but for liberty, and this was not so easily granted. It was while the question of exchange or parole was being settled that the Seigneur, glad of anything that would keep him in motion, was induced by the Abbé to come to Washington Place. If you ask the object, my impression is that the good Abbé was anxious to justify Armand's choice, and the Seigneur to pour out, so far as a gentleman might, his anger.

Scarcely had greetings with Madam been exchanged when the Seigneur turned to Ernie. "And this is the young lady, I suppose," he said brusquely, "who is so fond of the game of war that she plays with boys' heads as she might with pawns on a chess-board."

Ernie tried to speak, but though her lips moved, the terrible dread at her heart (had he not spoken of play-

ing with heads? and, oh, how angry he looked!) precluded speech. But for the Abbé's arm she would have fallen at her accuser's feet. It was the Abbé also who comforted her with words of cheer.

"Fear not!" he cried, smiling broadly, to show her how little reason there was for doing otherwise. "Armand is safe; the Seigneur is not angry with thee; *tout va bien, chère petite*."

He looked appealingly at the Seigneur, who in spite of himself felt inclined to smile. Certainly, this tall, stately girl—looking taller and statelier than ever in her deep mourning—went as little with his preconceived notions of her as with Père Langevin's "*chère petite*" and *tutoyer*-ing. He began to perceive also the marks of illness and grief, and so murmured some reassuring words. But he was also thinking to himself what unreasonable creatures women are—by their wiles sending poor fools to destruction, and then eluding blame by fainting if you were moved to tell them your mind on the subject.

As for Madam Washington Randolph, a good part of the conversation that ensued was Greek to her. She was not only ignorant of Ernie's part in the various tragic events that had occurred, but it had to be carefully explained to her that there was something more than friendly feeling between her daughter and Armand. It may be that obtuseness is one of the penalties of greatness.

One good result of the revelation coming at that special time was that, too happy to see Ernie's smile dawning once more, she did not mention—probably entirely forgot—Armand's connection with the Inquisition, the Jesuits, and Bloody Mary. She conversed affably with the Seigneur that evening, and Mr. Fraser sighed a deep sigh of content as for the first time in many months he heard her mention William Ware.

CHAPTER XVII

Needless to say, Washington Place showed all its old hospitality. Faithful Mammy, burning to do honor to the house she had served so long, and from which a million Proclamations of Emancipation could not have severed her, prepared her masterpieces, and commanded Uncle Ab to bring forth the long-concealed treasures of silver and precious china—heirlooms that spoke for themselves. Madam was her dignified self, and if the beautiful girl Armand loved impressed the Seigneur as very quiet, her scarcely less beautiful sister made amends. “He’s a sho-nuff Snoor,” whispered Uncle Ab to her, as she was on her way to be presented. “And if he were a sure-enough emperor,” said Janie haughtily, “do you suppose a Washington Randolph would care?” And holding her head high, she sailed in as if she had been the emperor’s consort. But as the great man unbent, she unbent; and before the evening was over, she had reproduced for him the comedy of Aunt Pocahontas and the hams. The Seigneur, on hiring a carriage at the little hotel that war times had brought within a few miles of the Place, had ordered rooms for the night. The Abbé had said nothing, but after seeing the Seigneur into the carriage, had quietly gone back and countermanded the order, and when they reached Madam’s paid and dismissed the driver. The event justified his expectation. Before the evening was over, the

Seigneur had agreed to remain—not only for the night, but until Armand's fate should be decided.

But it was through Mr. Fraser that a perfect *entente cordiale* was established. One night, after the ladies and the priest had taken themselves away, the conversation, guided by Mr. Fraser, took a more intimate turn. He spoke of Armand as he had known him from the first hour he came among them: shy, gentle, timid almost, except when it was a question of right and wrong, and then standing bravely up even against his hard old grandmother; never in all the years he had known him doing an unworthy action or uttering an unworthy thought. "As for going into the war," said he, "you can hardly expect a Southerner to condemn him. Being under age, I suppose he should have been bound by your decision; but however that may be, it—or the love that prompted it—has been the making of him. He went into it a boy, he is coming out of it a man. He used to think too much, to dream too much—a dangerous indulgence in this matter-of-fact world, as I have reason to know. He needed to learn to act, and he has learned. As for the girl he loves, we shall be unselfish indeed if we let him carry her off, for even old fellows like myself think her matchless. But"—and here he smiled his winning smile—"all that is left to the old fellows is the power of making the young ones happy."

"Oh, hush! hush!" broke in the Seigneur, his proud eyes, to the other's amazement, filling with tears. "do you think you need to plead for the boy?"

He rose and walked restlessly up and down the room; then coming back, sat down nearer Mr. Fraser's easy chair, but with his face in shadow.

"Listen," he said, "to a bit of history that goes back farther than Armand. When my father, ruined, went to the New World, my brother and I remained in England, educated and provided for by the uncle who afterwards left me Beaulieu. Our home was in a cathedral town; our tutor a clergyman of good family, through whom and the name we bore we were introduced into society, and, Catholics though we were, were soon specially at home with the cathedral dignitaries. The archdeacon—like Trollope's, a man of higher social position than his bishop—had a daughter, an only child, with whom I fell ardently on love. When I went to her father, I learned that she had been promised provisionally to a distant cousin—an American on the father's side and at that time in the United States. This cousin, they told me, was a genius, but dreamy and unpractical—sins in the archdeacon's opinion more heinous than breaches of the decalogue—but, like myself, almost certain to inherit fortune. To make a long story short, I gathered that the influence of the father would be on the side of him whose fortune proved greatest, or—on the principle of the bird in hand—was inherited first.

"A nobler man would have thought of the prior claims of his rival, would have tried to learn the real state of the girl's heart. I was the more to blame that, friendly as Helen always was, I could not, unless in my most

sanguine moments, believe her in love with me. On the contrary, I believed she was in love with the cousin; for sometimes when I came upon her unawares, she seemed to be sunk in happy revery, and more than once I saw her blushing conceal letters she had been poring over.

"Not long after speaking to her father, my uncle died. The estate of Beaulieu was then very much smaller than it is now, and I had truthfully described it to Archdeacon Trevor; but the money that came with it was a set-off to this. The father became enthusiastic in my cause; and after making certain stipulations—in regard to settlements, the free exercise of his daughter's religion, and our spending a certain portion of every year in England—accepted me as his future son-in-law.

"Pressing business connected with the estate made it necessary for me to go to Canada at once, but in a year I was to return for my wife. One circumstance impressed me unpleasantly, and will probably make you smile at my credulity; my prospective father-in-law insisted on doing the wooing—so far as words were concerned—himself. For this he frankly stated the reason. Helen, he feared, still cherished some feeling for the impractical cousin; it would therefore be best that I should say farewell to her simply as a dear friend. By the time I had crossed the ocean and she had had time to miss the many little attentions I had been free to pay, my obliging proxy would have settled matters with her. And I was then to consider myself—and to be free to write to her as—her accepted lover.

"I say again, a nobler man would not have been satisfied with such an arrangement. I agreed to it, lest I should lose her altogether; and I excused myself to myself, as selfish men in such circumstances do, by trying to believe that the unpractical cousin must be a poor creature, incapable of loving as I did. I had counted on some happy hours with her before I left, and on taking a warmer farewell than that of a mere friend. But, as the archdeacon said, it was better to run no risk.

"I came to the New World, bought back the acres my uncle had alienated, and was just about to begin the restoration of the Château, when word came to me that my promised wife was gone. And with whom, do you think? Not with the cousin—for whom, it transpired, she had never had more than a sisterly affection—but with my own brother, in whom I had confided, to whose care I had left her, and for whose treachery I had myself provided the means. You will say I was well served, and I agree with you. But don't blame the girl. There are women who are angels, and she was one of them. So secretly had Louis conducted his love-making, that she was pledged to him before I went away, pledged to him when he so warmly grasped my hand and promised to take care of her for my sake. When her father attempted to prosecute my suit, she told him her heart was irrevocably another's, but as she was forbidden by my brother to declare who that other was, he naturally supposed him to be her cousin.

"Louis was what ladies call 'a charming fellow'; smiling, playing, singing, dancing away, not only his days and nights, but his life. I, you see, am of the Bluebeard order——" "Well," he amended, in answer to his interlocutor's protest, "of the grim, feudal order. Louis was like a Greek god—and he had just as much soul.

"I never saw him again, never wrote him a line. But——well, you know, I had money, and what better could I do with it than spend it for Helen, my brother being absolutely penniless. Being thus free to travel and gratify many whims, he did not tire of her, and she loved him to the last. Wishing to be reconciled to me, he sent her and the boy to prepare the way, and left himself by the next steamer—the ill-fated *Deira*, which never reached land. I have heard people say there is no such thing as a broken heart; I know of at least one woman who died of one. It was a strange fate that sent her to me to die, and that gave me the sad privilege of laying her in her last resting-place and making it beautiful."

What Mr. Fraser did, when the Seigneur stopped speaking, struck even the latter, preoccupied as he was, as strange in the circumstances. Rising, he took from a casket, which even his cousins had never seen opened, a silver-gilt loving-cup—an article not then vulgarized as it has been since—and filled it with the wine standing before them.

"Let us drink together to her memory," said he. And first putting it to his own lips, he offered it to the other.

The Seigneur—wondering, but with thoughts still far away—took the cup almost mechanically and tasted the wine. But as he was about to give it back into Mr. Fraser's hands, he started, looked more closely at the arms engraved upon it, and then asked almost in a whisper:

"How in God's name did you come by this cup?"

"Honestly," said the other, with his gentle smile. "It was given me by Helen's father the last time I saw him—a sop to Cerberus, perhaps. I am the unpractical cousin."

"I remember it, I remember it. And for the man who did his best to wrong you, you bring it forth and fill it with wine. Ah, it is you alone who were worthy of her."

"Nay," said Mr. Fraser, grasping the other's hand, "it is you who have done nobly. While I have spent my life vainly dreaming of the woman we loved, you have been her guardian angel. God forever bless you, you good, good man!"

There are feelings too intimate, too sacred, to be set down in black and white. Let us listen to that night's talk no longer.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Washington Randolphs remarked that the Seigneur was a different man from that night, although all they ever knew of the conversation that has been partly reported was that it had brought about the discovery of their dear friend's relationship to Armand. Ernie was the only one to suspect that, so far as Mr. Fraser was concerned, the discovery had taken place long before. "Now I understand," she said to Mr. Fraser, when they were alone, "and I shall never be jealous again. Do you remember how angry I used to be because you loved Armand best?"

"Because you *thought* I loved Armand best, you mean. You used to be angry too that I was 'kin' to Sallie Preston. Now you can begin practising 'Cousin Fraser' at once."

Ernie only smiled. She was beginning to recover health and spirits, but slowly. The Seigneur once asked Mr. Fraser if she were not very quiet, and almost intimated that Janie would have been a more lively companion. "Ah," said Mr. Fraser, "wait till you see the real Ernie. Janie is delightful, I grant you; but compared with Ernie, when she is herself, there is not a girl I know that is not

"'as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine.'"

Janie herself, had she heard, would have heartily agreed. She called herself Ernie's understudy; she told

the Seigneur she was a very small star making the most of its twinkle while the moon was in eclipse; she flirted with the Abbé; made nothing of asking the Seigneur, if he chanced to be in thoughtful mood, what in the world he was looking so solemn about; and felt repaid for all when at last she won her dearer self to an old-time laugh.

And then there came letters from Armand—one, full of affection and gratitude, for the Seigneur, and another for Ernie's very self. In the latter—in addition to the *choses intimes*, which, of course, I can not be expected to repeat or even to know—Armand spoke of the debt he owed, first, to Colonel Vernon, and then to the nurse whom the colonel had provided; who had come to him when life was almost gone, devoted herself to him day and night, literally brought him back from death, and was now almost worn out in his service. He could never repay her, but would Ernie try and think of something he could do to show at least that he was not ungrateful? Colonel Vernon had encouraged him to hope he would soon be paroled; should that hope be fulfilled, might he come to Washington Place? Ernie read the letter with happy tears—then read it a second time on her knees. And she loved the writer the better that there was a blot on the page where the dear grave at the Tryst was mentioned.

Part of the letter she read to her mother and sister. "Might he come to the Place, indeed?" exclaimed Janie the impetuous. "It would not be good for him if he

did *not* come to the Place. And as for that good, dear nurse, would her mother not write to her that very day and beg her to come with him?" And Madam did write that very day, and in her stately way said many kind things. And then they all took heart and began to live in hope and returning happiness.

On the Seigneur's arrival, Polly Coon had been specially—and with certain reminders and threats—warned off by Mammy. But Polly had largely got over her fear of Mammy. And one fine morning, while the family were still at breakfast, she whisked past that sable guardian, and, boldly entering the dining-room, affably saluted the great man and began a conversation with him:

"Was it your maw or your gran'maw what had her head cut off?" There was an awful silence, in which Uncle Ab tried to capture the intruder. But Polly, dodging him round the table, carried on the conversation at her ease. "Tchuh! how simple I am. 'Course I know it wasn't your maw, for the old Frenchwoman's your maw—I'm glad she ain't mine! Well" (and she turned to Madam), "she's come back."

"Mrs. de St. Cyr come back!" exclaimed Madam, really interested, as well as anxious to rescue the conversation from Polly Coon's guidance. "I wonder where she has been."

"She has been at Beaulieu," said the Seigneur. "She arrived, bag and baggage, imploring shelter till the war should be over. I fancied from her account that her life had been in danger a dozen times."

"But how strange she should have gone off without a word."

"Not at all," said the Seigneur cynically, "unless the word would have been of some service to herself."

"And why has she left Beaulieu now?" asked Janie.

"I bribed her. I got her off before me, but she stopped in New York to shop. How she ever got here with all the impedimenta she started with, to say nothing of what she may have collected en route, heaven only knows."

"If that ain't des' like her," said Polly. "Your maw's a awful selfish old woman."

Whatever Mrs. de St. Cyr's shortcomings, Madam felt she must send to inquire for her. But before they left the table, there was a shout from the gallery. They were hoping for news of Armand that day, but, behold, here was Armand himself, with that rogue of an Abbé—who had made some excuse for leaving them, the day before—getting out at the steps.

You may imagine there was a rush to meet him. In the general mixing-up of everybody there was little opportunity of observing whether there was entire impartiality in the warmth of his greetings. He did not try to speak—he could not. But for a prisoner—a prisoner who had been at death's door too—he looked better than they had feared he would; and oh, so happy.

But who was this little figure in the carriage, to whom the Abbé turned, after Armand had got out? Why, the nurse, of course, whom in their gladness they were nearly forgetting, but whose goodness to Armand would make

them her friends forever. But why does she draw back and hide her face? Why, as they see when Armand draws her hands away, is she laughing and crying together? Why, at sight of her, does Ernie rush forward and clasp her in her arms, and kiss her again and again? And why does Janie's voice ring out, though with a quiver worthy of Mrs. de St. Cyr's, in the long unheard



You guess, do you not, that Armand's good angel was no other than our dear little Eliza Jane.

That day, and for days after, how much there was to tell, how much to hear! The Cause for which they had sacrificed so much, and which was so soon to be the Lost Cause (though that the young people at least did not then dream), was not forgotten, nor the grave which the spring and the work of loving hands had made beautiful. They had deeply mourned, they would mourn again, for both; and they would never forget. But life and youth and love will assert themselves; and even she who had suffered most had to yield and let herself be happy.

And how good it was to hear again Eliza Jane's "Won't we, dears?" Her little journey into the world had scarcely changed her. There was the same respectful attention to her elders; the same adoration in her eyes when she turned them on Ernie; the same delicate

reticence when she spoke of her own, whether they had been fighting on the one side or on the other. Even when she laughed, there was the same sudden return to gravity, as if mirth might not be quite the thing. This was especially the case when she heard of Miss Bixby's wooings. Ah, what an age away was the time when in reference to the governess she had been wont to beg them to "wait a little, dears."

But, as it chanced, it was she herself who had the latest news of that very matter-of-fact person. It was funny to watch her as she told the tale—her respect for her late teacher contending with her appreciation of the ludicrous. On her way to New York from Virginia, Miss Bixby had bethought her, it appeared, that before making a contract for life it would be well to discover exactly to what she was binding herself, and she had therefore proposed to Captain Silas a trial passage. Properly chaperoned, she had made it. The passage was a stormy one, the cabin stuffy; and when the conversation turned upon the glories of the Alhambra, Captain Silas not only did not know what the Alhambra was, but when his fiancée tried to enlighten him went to sleep. Miss Bixby thought she could do better. On her return to New York, she chanced to meet another suitor, then making his way to Canada—for he was an escaped prisoner. A certain matter that had interposed to prevent their happiness before (thus delicately did Eliza Jane refer to the wickedness of Polly Coon) had in the meantime been cleared up; and as her Northern sentiments had

not stood in the way of her listening to his addresses before, they did not now. The pair had been married at once, and would remain in Canada till the end of the war.

"And, pray, does the happy man know what the Alhambra is?" asked Madam, satirical for perhaps the first time in her life.

Eliza Jane was obliged to confess that she thought it improbable.

Polly Coon was, of course, on hand while this tale was being told, and at its close she clapped her hands.

"I knows what that prisoner's name is," she shouted, "an' won't Verdi catch it!"

"I don't fink," said Mammy Sarah, who had been not only an interested but a delighted listener, "dat dat pris'ner's name is Fatchy. I fink it kin' o' sounds moh lak Coon."

Polly's grin was frozen on her lips. Her eyes—each of them with a dozen interrogation points in it—traveled round the circle, resting at last on Eliza Jane, who could but nod acquiescence. She had indeed been empowered to break the matter to the child, and had undertaken to forward her to Canada under safe escort. Then, seeing Mammy, her old enemy, bringing her palms together suggestively, Polly made a brave effort. "O pshaw!" said she, "I ain't 'fraid o' her."

But as Janie led off in what she called the Wedding Chorus, "The State of Maine, Augustay, etc.," her piping voice was silent. She was mentally making over on airier lines the switch that still hung in the Mill kitchen.

CHAPTER XIX

As for the Abbé, he was like a great schoolboy in seeing his dear Seigneur happy. For happy the Seigneur was. Leaving faithful Uncle Ab and Mammy Sarah in charge, the Washington Randolphs were to go at once to Beaulieu with their guest, where Eliza Jane and Sallie Preston were to join them later. Ernie had at first shrunk from this plan. It seemed like deserting the Cause, she said, just when the struggle was hardest. But the doctor was peremptory in regard to change of scene; and Madam, still alarmed for her darling, was now only eager to be away. Mother and daughters had never been so much to each other before.

But it seemed like a dream to Ernie to hear the Seigneur discussing with the Abbé and Mr. Fraser his plans. The Château was to be restored, the new wing built; "the old fellows," as Mr. Fraser had said, were to "find their happiness in making the young ones happy." The Seigneur's reserve disappeared with the bitterness that had been brooding in his heart so long. In answer to a question of Janie's, he even told them of the Beaulieu ghost, the fame of which was in all the country round. "It is the ghost of my grandmother," said he, "who was guillotined in the Terror. She came over with the family; glad, I have no doubt, to turn her back on a country where the Right Divine and the Bourbon Lilies had lost their prestige; and she is a living—or a dead—

illustration of the motto, *Noblesse oblige*. For in the first place she makes no capital of her martyrdom; neither appearing without her head nor carrying it in her hand like a certain saint. She wears it proudly on her shoulders, as a *grande dame* should; but—tradition says because the scar on her beautiful neck remains—a white domino is thrown over her rich court dress. Then—unlike those malign spirits whose appearance bodes misfortune and death—our dear ghost's appearance is always an omen of good. Any one who takes the trouble to visit the haunted gallery at midnight may hear high heels tap-tapping on the oaken floor; but she shows herself only to members of the family, or those fated to become such, and to them only on one night of the year—the Eve of All Souls."

"The proper night," said Mr. Fraser,

'The nicht atween the Sancts an' the Souls,
When the bodiless gang about.' "

Polly Coon was gazing as if in a trance at the ceiling. "I wonder if Aunt Ernie will see her," said she softly.

For, throwing off all forebodings as to the future, and profiting by the indulgence that was a result of the general excitement, that young person had grown more audacious than ever; dropping in at all hours at the Place, taking to calling Ernie "Aunt Ernie," a liberty which she had attempted before, but which had been sternly frowned down by Madam. For the short space

of freedom remaining to her now they let her do very much as she would. Janie said it was like giving a person who was just going to be hanged his choice of breakfast.

Going back and forward constantly between the Washington Randolphs and Mrs. de St. Cyr, Polly brought, one day, the startling news that the latter was being served by Yaller Sal. Richt had been forgiving enough to go back long enough to see her settled, but not forgiving enough to remain. "I told her I wouldn't, if I was her," said Polly, as if that had decided the matter. "Your maw," she went on, addressing the Seigneur, "has brought on that secretary the Young Snoor told us about (if I was you, I wouldn't have give it to her); and when I went to see it I heard her tell Yaller Sal to watchy that veeper. I knew what she meant—I reckon I understan' French as well as her. Veeper herself!

"I saw the secretary anyhow. An' I saw what the Young Snoor had wrote with his knife. An' I know whose name he's a-goin' to finish off with." Certainly there were drawbacks to Miss Coon's society.

As for Sal, I am not sorry to record how she avenged for Mrs. de St. Cyr's victims the wrongs they had lacked power or opportunity to avenge for themselves. Far too astute to quarrel with her mistress, her face expressed nothing but the deepest compassion, and her soft, mellow voice was softer and mellower than ever, as she gave advice or charitably accounted for orders of which she did not approve.

"Clar to gracious, ole Mis', I would'n use no moh ob dat-ar har-dye. It done gib ole Gin'l Peyton sof'n ob de brain, an' it begun on him des lak it's beginnin' on you. It's mighty resky, ole Mis', mighty resky." Or, "Yo' don' wan' me to mak' free kin's o' hot bread foh brakfas' no moh? Law, ole Mis', I knowed no good would come o' dem sto' toofs. Bettah hab stuck to yo' own ole stomps—though they *wuz* mighty lonesome lak." Or, "Dat's a awful curus-cullud waterfall. Folks is askin' me all de time if 'tain't made o' Rose-M'rie's tail. I tell 'em I don' des know de rights ob it; dat all I *does* know is dat Rose M'rie's tail useter hang on dat ar nail, an' dat it don' hang dar no moh." As Mrs. de St. Cyr, though relentless in pointing out the ravages of time on others, was, as has been said, extremely sensitive as to its effects upon herself, and as Sal carefully chose her audience, it will be seen that in any little difference between mistress and maid, the maid had the decided advantage. Dismissing Sal had been tried; and the Frenchwoman, passing her cabin in the evening of a trying day, had seen a window full of grinning black faces, and heard a bass voice say with a loud guffaw, "'Specs dem long laigs is awt'ficial too." Next morning, Sal's mistress capitulated.

From shrewd observation Polly Coon rose to flights of fancy. "If you was to marry Miss Janie," she said to the Seigneur, "what kin would you be to the Young Snoor—besides what you are a'ready?" "Your mind seems rather to run on marriage," said the Seigneur.

"Yes," said Polly, "I think everybody should get married. Eliza Jane might marry Captain Vernon—they're both Yanks. I wisht I could get married myself before——" She finished with a sigh; all knew of what she was thinking. "I know one thing," she went on in melancholy tone, "when I has chil'n I won't be forever spankin' them. 'Less they deserve it," she added, brightening, as it occurred to her that it might be rather pleasant, for a change, to be the upper dog in a fight.

"Well," said the Seigneur, "you will be glad to hear that I have something better than what you propose in view for Miss Janie." Then, to Janie, "Our cousin, the young viscount, is coming out to us shortly."

Janie rose and made a sweeping curtsey. "I feel the honor, but" (with a gesture of despair) "it comes too late. My fate is already settled."

"What!" exclaimed Madam.

"Yes, my dear mother, I have resolved to immolate myself, like another Iphigenia, upon the altar of patriotism, though not quite in the same way. While we have so many heroes at home, shall I seek a foreign alliance? Besides, there might be another French Revolution, and I have a prejudice in favor of keeping my head on my shoulders."

"Oh, *nous avons changé tout cela*." The Seigneur spoke lightly, but one would have said he was a little disappointed. "Might one take the liberty of asking——?"

But Sallie Preston took the liberty without asking. "Oh, Janie! who is it?"

"That remains to be seen. So far, mine is only a general resolution." (Madam looked vastly relieved.) "But, my mind being made up to sacrifice myself, I shall do it handsomely. The oldest, most battered veteran in our army—the one with so few arms and legs and eyes and noses that no one else will have him, shall be the happy man."

"Wait till you see Gaston," said the Seigneur. "He is a fine fellow, and as great a madcap as yourself."

One could hardly help observing that while the Seigneur and Janie were quite unembarrassed by the coupling of their names, Eliza Jane blushed painfully when hers was mentioned. Sallie Preston asked Ernie and Janie afterwards if they had observed it. "You know," she added demurely, "she has too fine a sense of propriety to blush unless she had a right to do it."

Ernie hesitated. "The Vernons," she then said, "feel under a deep debt of gratitude to her, Armand tells me, for the skill and tenderness with which she nursed the Colonel's young brother. The doctors told them they owe his life to her—their mother's also, for she is very delicate, and her life has always seemed to be bound up in that of her youngest boy. Did you know that it was Eliza Jane, who, hearing that Colonel Vernon was coming to our neighborhood, spoke of us to him, and so brought about all his kindness? But——" here she hesitated again—"if I were you, I should not mention the Vernons to her. You know how she dislikes any reference to her own good deeds, and it might be embarrassing to her."

The others laughed, and Ernie laughed a little herself. "Well," said Janie, "we will not force confidence. 'We will wait a little, won't we, dears?'"

But Sallie Preston, well as she knew Eliza Jane's good qualities, was rash enough to express surprise. "Why," she said, "what a wonderful fortune for Eliza Jane! Colonel Vernon, Armand says, is a Boston Brahmin."

Ernie was certainly recovering, for she took up Sallie's innuendo with all her old fire. "And if he were the Sacred Cow of the Brahmins, would that make him too good for her? I am surprised and ashamed of you, Sallie Preston!"

But indeed it was Sallie Preston who had reason to be surprised. The royal family was actually growing democratic.

It was just before leaving for Canada that the entire party walked over to say good-bye to Mrs. de St. Cyr, their attendant imp bringing up the rear. The latter might have been in tears, but was not. Madam had undertaken to deliver her to her father in Montreal; that meant that the parting from Ernie was not to be on the day then passing, nor on the next—and Polly was an Epicurean. The others were in good spirits too. They had heard of our great general's magnificent strategy at Spottsylvania and Cold Harbor; and they did not know that the men who won those battles were starving. Happy in the present, the young lovers spoke little of the future. Each was satisfied with the days as they passed; perhaps afraid to mar their restfulness with anything more passionate.

They had been talking of the famous cabinet, which Ernie had not yet seen. So, when they entered the little parlor, Armand threw open the blinds nearest it, and they all gathered around. "You remember what I told you about my Vandalism," said he, "but——what have we here?"

What indeed! Seeing what they had there, every eye in the room, except those belonging to her, turned with one accord from the cabinet, and fixed themselves on Polly Coon.

"Naughty little Polly Coon!" said Mr. Fraser, with affected severity, "who did that?"

"S'pose the Young Snoor," said naughty little Polly Coon, unblushingly.

"And does the Young Seigneur spell like that?" asked Armand's uncle, turning to him with a smile.

But Armand did not hear. He was looking at Ernie. She was rosy-red, but, instead of the scorn of indignation with which she had once upon a time visited on him Polly's interference, there was divine tenderness in her beautiful eyes. His courage rose. He put his fate to the touch. "I think I should have expressed it a little differently," he said. "A man may not marry his aunt, and——"

Something important must have been happening elsewhere, for even while Armand hesitated, the lovers found themselves alone.

The legend, as finished, read:

"I LOVE ANT ERNIE."

CHAPTER XX

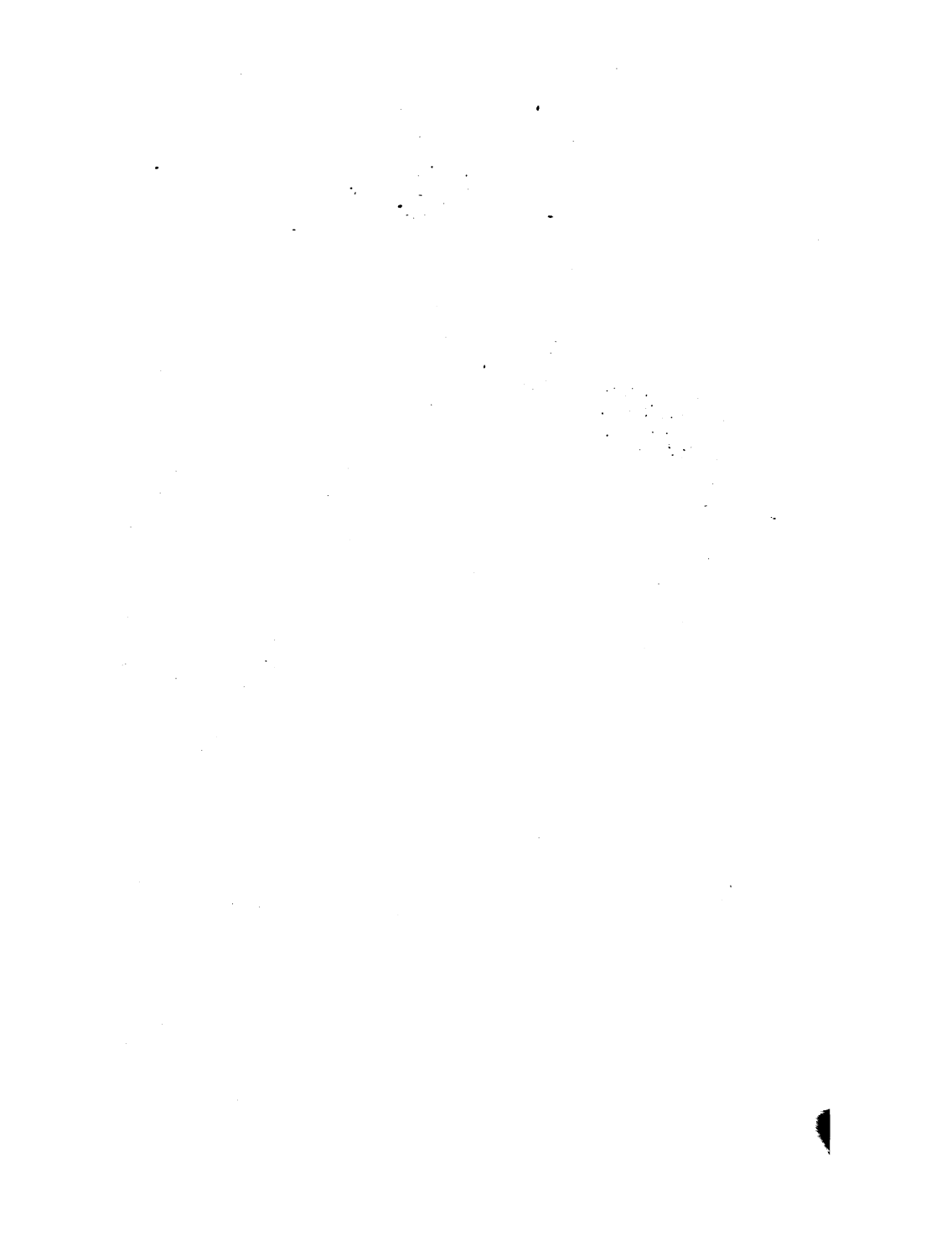
The Golden Age is past, the gods come no more to earth. Yet even in this Iron Age we have our dreams.

Among our hills and past Harry Randolph's grave, northern enterprise laid shining tracks long ago; and heavily-laden trains on these and as heavily-laden barges on the waters below, shriek and darken the air. We must not grumble, for it is the black nuggets that have given those who are left homes elsewhere.

But we do not forget, and sometimes we make pilgrimages. And now and then comes an hour when the whistles are silent, and the smoke vanishes away, and the hills are blue, and the river clear, and the world beautiful as of old.

THE END.





**no circumstances to be
Building**

[illegible]

